



Glory to Jesus Christ!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, We have the honor to present to you the text of a short and extended Short Handbook of Christian Etiquette for the Christian in the Temple of God, compiled by the Commission on Laity of the Diocese of St. Nicholas, with the blessing of Bishop Benedict Aleksyichuk, to help all of us follow the order in our temples.

A Short Handbook of Christian Etiquette in Our Church (compiled by the Commission on Laity of the Diocese of St. Nicholas)

Church is the meeting place of God and His people, of Christ and His Bride the Church; it is the embodiment of heaven and earth uniting in Christ. Recognizing this truth, the Christian, approaching God's temple the Church, should already be internally preparing for this meeting with an appropriately peaceful demeanor. This internal demeanor is reflected by outward signs and symbols in human behavior uniting the spiritual and physical. Our physical behavior influences and reflects our internal spiritual attitude.

I. Entering Church

Entering church the faithful cross themselves three times (men removing their head covering). Further entering one should make a bow to the Eucharistic Christ within the tabernacle on the altar. If the service has not begun, we approach the tetrapod to bow and kiss the icon and cross upon it. Crossing oneself twice before and once after venerating them, one proceeds to a pew for private prayer to greet the Lord in His house, with respect. After this, (if the service has not begun) we may greet those next to us with a slight nod of the head or quietly greeting "Glory be to Jesus Christ".

If one has come only for a short time for private prayer, upon leaving we approach the tetrapod as we did upon entering, then quietly leave church.

II. During the Liturgy

-Why should we attend Divine Liturgy?

Divine Liturgy is the essence and pinnacle of Christian life. It is our Christian obligation to participate in Divine Liturgy each Sunday and Holy days. Voluntary and conscious neglect of this without a serious reason is a grave sin--breaking of the Third Commandment. One should also not be late for Divine Liturgy. One should, in fact, come earlier to prepare, to attend confession, light candles, pray for private intentions. During Divine Liturgy one should not walk around so as not to distract others or keep it to a minimum.

-How to dress?

One's attire should be celebratory and becoming, showing due respect to our Lord, but modest and unpretentious, so as not to distract others.

-How to pray?

The Divine Liturgy is the pinnacle of liturgical life of the Church and the translation from the Greek is "joint work". In Liturgy the Church of earth unites with the Church of heaven to glorify God. Therefore, the faithful should "with one heart and one voice" take active part in all the prayers and songs, collectively responding to the prayers of the celebrant. Our personal private prayers are put off occurring before or after Liturgy, also before and after Eucharist.

-When do we cross ourselves?

We make the sign of the cross on ourselves at appropriate times, i.e.: when the celebrant blesses us with a cross, an icon, the Chalice or other blessed items, as well as after the phrases: "In the name of the Father...", "Glory be to the Father...", "Peace be with you", "let the.....upon you."

-To stand, sit or kneel?

In the tradition of our Eastern rite, our ordinary position in church is standing, which reflects spiritual awareness and readiness to fulfil God's will. One can sit during the ektenias, the reading of the Epistle or psalms, the homily and announcements. We stand with particular attention during Eucharistic prayers (from the words "Let us lift up our hearts" to the song "It is truly meet..."), during the Eucharist (from "Holy things for the holy" to "Having received the divine, holy..."). In our Eastern rite there is no kneeling during Divine Liturgy (except during some services during Lent). Kneeling is a practice borrowed from the Latin (Roman) rite. In the Eastern rite in all the most important parts of the Liturgy we meet our Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior standing, slightly bowing our head.

-How do we approach Eucharist?

The Holy Eucharist (changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ) is the high point of Divine Liturgy. Receiving Eucharist completes our participation in the Liturgy. It is important to note that one should only approach the Eucharist if not in grave sin (conscious breaking of any of the 10 Commandments). Lighthearted and unworthy receipt of the Eucharist is the sin of sacrilege. The Lord established the Sacrament of Reconciliation so the faithful can be worthy of the sanctifying grace. The Church recommends frequent Reconciliation (hopefully monthly). If we are in a state of grace, we may participate in Eucharist daily during Divine Liturgy (but not more than once in a day).

Approaching or retreating from Eucharist we do not approach and venerate icons and walk about church. When we approach we cross ourselves carefully and bow slightly before the Holy Gifts, place our hands across our chest right upon left, repeat our Christian name and, tipping our head back, open our mouths wide, not extending our tongue or touching the spoon.

Having received the Holy Eucharist we step aside, cross ourselves, slightly bow and go back to our place and there, standing, quietly pray, thanking Christ for graciously entering our heart. This is an opportunity for private prayer which others are partaking in the Eucharist. If the priest happens to walk by us with the Eucharistic chalice we should cross ourselves and bow our head in reverence.

Recognizing that since Eucharist is the culmination of the Divine Liturgy, during this time, whether participating in Eucharist or not, all present should remain quiet. Out of respect for the Lord and one's neighbor all should stand, not speaking or greeting others, not sitting, in deep contemplation and respectfully waiting for the end of this great Sacrament.

At the end of Liturgy and private prayer after we approach the tetrapod, kiss the cross and icon as before Liturgy three times, and leave Church quietly and peacefully.

Sources: Catechism of the UGCC «Christ, Our Pascha»; Canons of CCEC; A Short Handbook of Christian Etiquette in Our Church (with additions) for the faithful of Ternopil-Zboriv Eparchy UGCC..

Expanded version of Handbook: <https://www.facebook.com/komisiamyrian/>

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Most Reverend Benedict – Bishop St. Nicholas Eparchy in Chicago