



THE ARCHDIOCESAN PRESBYTERS COUNCIL LITURGICAL ISSUES COMMITTEE REPORT

*A report presented by Father Steven Tschlis
at the APC meeting held in Dallas, TX
March 1995*

Our liturgical life is in shambles. As Father Thomas Hopko has remarked: "Our highly praised liturgical tradition is for the most part unknown and un-lived by great numbers of our people, and all too often by the official teachers and professors of our faith as well" (*All the Fullness of God*, p. 186). In an article written more than 30 years ago for the *St. Vladimir's Quarterly* entitled '*Orthodoxy in America: The Liturgical Problem*', Hopko's father-in-law, the late Father Alexander Schmemmann, offered a diagnosis of the malaise that afflicts so much of our worship even today. There is no substitute for simply reading that article and I encourage everyone genuinely interested in the quality and meaning of our worship to do so.

The question of text and translation

Our parishes need adequate (i.e., well-printed) and official (i.e., endorsed by the synod of bishops and required of all parishes in the Archdiocese) bilingual texts of our services for the pews in order to better enable our faithful to participate in the riches of

our liturgical life. At the clergy-laity congress in Chicago this past summer, I was greeted with yet another translation of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom by a priest in the South. Currently, there are a dozen or more translations of varying quality in use throughout the Archdiocese. While I realize that as an Archdiocese we are still suffering from post 1970 clergy-laity congress syndrome, the simple fact remains that the current variety of translations of uneven quality in use is detrimental to our worship overall. The establishment of official text, in Greek and English, of our most frequently celebrated liturgies and services (particularly Chrysostom, Basil, the Presanctified, the Memorial Service, Baptism, Marriage, the *Artoclasia*, the Akathist Hymn, etc.) should be the first priority of our seminary faculty, the national forum of church musicians and synod of bishops. This project should include our most commonly sung hymns: "Christ is risen," the resurrection *apolytikia*, etc. This will take 5-10 years to accomplish if it is to be done well. Although we have a basis from which to begin in the translations of Basil and Chrysostom, etc. offered us by Holy Cross Press as well as the work of a number of Church musicians, we cannot afford to wait any longer to refine, solidify and complete the work that has already been done. (I speak here only of our Archdiocese and leave aside the attempt at a pan-Orthodox translation of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom undertaken some years ago which has, so far as I know, been relegated to the dustbin.)

The question of Great Week

Here again, the question of an official text in both Greek and English is of paramount importance. There are currently three texts in use by the parishes of our Archdiocese: Papadeas, and more recently, Vaporis and Contos. These three "versions" need to be examined carefully at a number of levels: consistency, quality of Greek text and English translation, rubrics, etc.

Further, we as a Church need to throw open at an official level the question of how we currently celebrate Great Week. Our current practice of worship "by anticipation" throughout Holy Week is a vexing issue which Father Calivas calls "a particularly peculiar tradition which circumvents, both normal liturgical practice as well as the natural order of things" (*Holy Week and Pascha*, p. 15). Is it not ludicrous for us to be singing "O Joyful Light" ("now that we have come to the setting of the sun") at 10AM on Holy Thursday morning at the vesperal or evening Liturgy of St. Basil? Are there not services unique to Great Week - like the Washing of the Feet on Holy Thursday following the Liturgy of St. Basil - that could be revived across our Archdiocese to the benefit of our laity at a pastoral level? Clearly, there is much here that deserves discussion, debate and reform.

The question of reviving other ancient liturgies

Father Calivas reminds us that "according to local custom, three other ancient liturgies are also used by the Orthodox Churches on the occasion of the feast day of the saints to which their authorship is traditionally attributed. These are the liturgies of St. James (Iakovos), the ancient liturgy of Jerusalem; St. Mark, the ancient liturgy of Alexandria; and St. Gregory the Theologian, an ancient liturgy of Cappadocia and Alexandria" (*An Introduction to the Divine Liturgy*, p. 14). In my opinion, these ancient liturgies need to be revived and celebrated here in America.

There is an inadequate Greek/English text of the Liturgy of St. James that was hastily prepared by Holy Cross Press a number of years ago to celebrate Archbishop Iakovos' 30th anniversary. This text needs to be refined and corrected, then reissued for parish use. (I would add, parenthetically, that in addition to October 23rd, it is theoretically possible to celebrate this liturgy

on the Sunday after Christmas when we again remember St. James.) Professor Foundoulis of the University of Thessaloniki has provided Greek texts for St. Mark and St. Gregory that could be used, with some editing, as the basis for an English translation of these services.

The spirit of joy

Given the importance of establishing texts, translations and music, the simple fact remains that liturgy is far more than any of these. Quality liturgical books always remain means rather than ends. At its most fundamental level, liturgy is indeed "the work of the people", the most intimate facet of the Church's living faith in Jesus Christ and a function of His life-giving Spirit within her. Sadly, in far too many of our parishes, our people no longer assemble to "work" but remain merely spectators while we - the "professionals" - do their work "for" them. As Father Schmemmann remarked: "It is not true that people do not come to Church because they have no time. One always has time for what one enjoys. People do not come to Church because they quite literally do not enjoy it and they do not enjoy it because the very reality of joy is absent from the way we present the liturgy" (*The Liturgical Problem, SVTQ 8 1964 p. 181*). That joy must first be present in our hearts as presbyters. If it is, I believe that it will find concrete expression in the revival of a number of significant liturgical practices that we have lost or abandoned, much to our detriment:

The kiss of peace - according to Chrysostom, was a full kiss on the lips, men with men, women with women. This kiss was so intimate a gesture that the early Church fathers emphasize the need for it to be kept "pure", but *kept* nonetheless. We today kiss everyone and on all occasions *except* during the liturgy.

The so-called "silent" prayers - particularly the anaphora, must again be read aloud and not silently by the celebrant "to himself", for these are the prayers of the entire assembly, or, to put it more accurately, of the Church herself. They are the heart of the liturgy and the core of our communal worship. In his *Novella 137* the emperor Justinian decreed by law that bishops and presbyters "say the prayers used in the Divine Oblation in a voice that can be heard by the faithful that the minds of those who listen may be stirred to greater compunction." Those who did not do so were to be fined.

The prayers for catechumens - need to be restored, at least during Lent if we are preparing catechumens for baptism and/or chrismation at Pascha, for we are a missionary Church or no Church at all.

Further, there are a host of liturgical gestures - the bowing of our heads, the raising of our hands, etc. - which we continue to do as leaders of worship, but which our people, relegated to the role of being spectators, no longer do. How disincarnate the prayer of our laity has become! These gestures need to be quietly, subtly encouraged in our laity over the next generation in order to restore a bodily, physical sense of participation in our worship.

There is, of course, much more to be discussed. However, I will limit this report to only a few pages. My purpose in so limited a space is merely to promote discussion and debate and indicate a direction for conscious liturgical reform that reflects more fully our desire to worship the Lord "in Spirit and Truth."



After sharing the above report with the clergy of the Diocese of San Francisco at the annual diocesan clergy-laity assembly in May 1995 Father Tschlis received the following letter from Father Demetrius Dogias of the Annunciation Church in Sacramento, CA:

May 31, 1995

I read the Liturgical Issues Committee Report of the APC with much interest and would like to offer the following four comments:

- 1.) I agree wholeheartedly with the need for a common, approved translation of our services.
- 2.) I would further suggest that, in addition to a common translation, there is a need to establish a common rubric. I have served at weddings and baptisms with many priests and each one seems to have his idiosyncrasies. I am also concerned about liturgical innovations which are unilaterally instituted by some priests in other sacraments, as well as during the services of Holy Week. Where do such "enlightenments" come from?
- 3.) I agree there is a need for liturgical renewal - but also in terms of having services at all! I am always amused by priests who say they don't have many weekday celebrations of the Divine Liturgy because no one comes. Well, of course they don't come if there are no services offered! We are in great danger of becoming a Sunday-

only Church. Yet, people can be educated to come to weekday services. Over my 14 years in Sacramento, I've tried very hard to serve at least one weekday Liturgy every week; it isn't always so, but it is a goal for which I strive.

- 4.) I am always leery of proposals such as those made in your report, specifically your suggestions that we revive other ancient liturgies and restructure the services of Holy Week along more ancient patterns. In my opinion there is a very serious question which we must ask before we step into such dangerous waters: do we do what we do now because we have been spiritually indolent and perhaps not very loyal to the liturgical forms of the Church; or, do we do what we do now because this is where the Holy Spirit has led us? You can't just return to the past without denying the guidance of the Holy Spirit which guides us every day of every year.

Obviously, these are very serious questions that demand much discussion and even more prayer. However, there is a good sign here: the 21st century is upon us and it seems that we're finally waking up!

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Father Tsichlis' response:

July 24, 1995

Thank you for your letter of May 31st! I appreciate your comments and offer my apologies for not responding sooner.

First, let me assure you that I agree, in substance, with virtually everything you have said. I agree that there is need for "liturgical renewal...in terms of having services at all!" Like you, I am not always able to meet this goal of celebrating "one weekday Liturgy every week," but it is certainly an ideal worth striving for. (Last week, I celebrated Liturgy for the feast of the Prophet Elijah; this week, I am celebrating Liturgy on Tuesday and Thursday, for the feasts of St. Anna and St. Panteleimon.) I have also found it useful to pray a variety of services around different events that I know people will attend. For example, we pray small vespers prior to each Bible study; small Compline prior to our adult study fellowship; and the 3rd, 6th and 9th hours during retreats like the one we hosted earlier this month with Bishop Kallistos Ware.

I also agree on the "need to establish a common rubric" for our services, although I am somewhat less concerned about liturgical variety in minor things, provided they are within the overall scope of our liturgical tradition. For example, there is a wide variety of rubrics in the manuscript tradition of the marriage service as it has evolved over the centuries. As a case in point, the earlier codices say nothing of the participation of the groomsman or maid of honor in exchanging the rings or crowns. Some of my parishioners from Cyprus inform me that there, as is the more ancient custom, it is still the priest who does these things. However, I believe we must ask serious questions about the many "western" customs that have crept into our liturgical practice all too uncritically. The procession of the bride and her father down the center aisle to the tune of the wedding march from Lohengrin - "Here comes the bride" - is certainly one of the most appalling and completely foreign elements of our current liturgical practice here in America. Finally, I believe we must reconnect the

sacraments of marriage and baptism to the Eucharist when and where possible pastorally.

Your question: "do we do what we do now because we have been spiritually indolent and perhaps not very loyal to the liturgical forms of the Church; or do we do what we do now because this is where the Holy Spirit has lead us?" is indeed a "serious question." I am probably much more confident of the answer than you: in my opinion, we currently suffer from the worst kind of liturgical nominalism and apathy and, more often than not, we are interested only in the form rather than the content of our worship, the letter instead of the Spirit. I cannot believe that the Holy Spirit has led us to our current liturgical decadence. However, I do agree that we "can't just return to the past" simply for the sake of returning to the past. My proposals regarding the returning of the celebration of Holy Week to its more ancient pattern, the revival of some ancient liturgies to be celebrated on the feasts of the saints associated with them, the revival of the prayers for the catechumens, etc. are a plea for a return to liturgical sanity that I believe will better enable us as a Church to face the 21st century. I only hope it's true that "we're finally waking up."

As I mentioned at the end of my report, my purpose was primarily to promote discussion on these issues. I certainly don't believe that I have the final word on such matters. But this is, at least, how things seem to me. Thank you for the discussion!

Father Steven Tsichlis

In November, 1995 Father Alkiviades Calivas, then professor of liturgical theology at Holy Cross Seminary in Brookline, MA was asked to respond to the Liturgical Issues Committee report for the March 1996 issue of The Presbyter, the national newsletter of the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council. However, because of his appointment as president of Hellenic College/Holy Cross by then Archbishop Iakovos, he was unable to do so. In a brief letter to the editors of The Presbyter at that time, Fathers Steven Tsichlis and Chris Margaritis, Father Calivas said:

January 9, 1996

I agree with much of what is said in the Committee Report on Liturgical Issues. It is true that we have not accepted the challenges of the times in a systematic and creative way. Good translations of our liturgical texts are a case in point. Fortunately, SCOBA has appointed a pan-Orthodox liturgical commission to address this issue. The progress has been slow and full of difficulties, but - nevertheless - hopeful. The report is correct, also, about the text of the Liturgy of St. James. You will also find me in agreement - with proper considerations - about the kiss of peace, the priestly prayers (and especially the anaphora) and the petitions for the catechumens.

I thought the enclosed copy of an article on liturgical reform that I wrote - "The Penthekte Synod of 691-692AD and Liturgical Reform" - and which was recently published in the *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* would be of interest to you. You may wish to quote parts of it for the newsletter.

What follows is a brief excerpt from the above mentioned article by Father Calivas that appeared in the GOTR 40:1&2, 1995:

The Process of Liturgical Reform

The worship of the Church is neither a relic of the past nor a lifeless object of research. Worship is the fundamental activity of the Church. It is her faith in motion. In worship, the church encounters the living god, while through it God is present to the Church. Through her worship the Church conveys, recommends, instills and imparts a particular vision of faith and way of life. Through dogma and prayer, the Church invites us to discover continually, and to experience and realize as well, our true and eternal mode of being.

True worship is dynamic. It develops and changes. However, authentic, effective and lasting liturgical changes do not flow out of emotional responses to a given situation, condition or crisis but are the result of genuine, commonly shared and pastorally proven needs as authenticated by the Church.

Liturgical reform is a complex process. It operates on many levels and may involve one, several or all of the elements that constitute a particular rite or service. The reform process, first of all, must be mindful of the authentic liturgical ethos of the Church and be guided by its foundational principles. Also, liturgical reform must be well informed, orderly and systematic. Furthermore, it must retain a certain ascetical tension in relation to the Church's cultural milieu, lest she fall victim to one or another ephemeral trend. Moreover, reform must emanate from the conviction that the liturgical assembly provides the essential means by which the members of the

faith community achieve their most authentic identity. Thus, the rule of prayer with all its varied components must not simply be admired and honored. Above all it must be loved, studied, analyzed, learned and lived. This latter activity constitutes the essence and meaning of liturgical renewal, which in turn is the mother of genuine liturgical reform.

Thus, liturgical renewal, which aims at making worship dynamic, effective and relevant in the changing and developing process of history, is of paramount importance to the Church. To facilitate the process of liturgical renewal, the Church must advance three fundamental activities. First: the critical examination of the inner meaning of worship, which applies an awareness of and an appreciation for the living tradition of the Church. Second: the critical study and analysis of ritual activity and date, which implies an appreciation of the significance of rite and symbol, as well as a respect for cultural and historical situations. Third: the encouragement of liturgical creativity for a more conscious, active and deeply personal participation of the people in liturgical worship, which implies a faith community which is seriously engaged in catechesis and social outreach. This third activity is, in actuality, the goal of the other two.

The Church, therefore, through her theologians and pastors, is bound to continually probe the depths of her liturgical prayer, song, action and symbol, in order to sustain the vitality of liturgy, inform liturgical piety, improve liturgical practice and ensure both the interior and exterior participation of the faithful in worship. More importantly, the sustained analysis of the inner meaning of worship allows us to see and appreciate the connection between dogma and liturgy, liturgy and life and liturgy and social justice. In addition, we discover meanings

previously overlooked; learn to give accent to those aspects and truths of the tradition which may have greater value to the present generation; provide more adequate instruction about the inherited rites; and measure the efficacy of their structures and content in the present historical and cultural context.

The invitation to examine critically the inner meanings of worship also entails a certain risk as well as a challenge. Some of our favored ideas, widely accepted notions and explanations, and familiar customs do not now or may not in the future, stand up well under the scrutiny of historical research and sound, prayerful, theological reflection. What do we do when we come up against a deficient liturgical practice, text or custom? Do we simply stay the course with an appeal to an uncertain tradition? Or, do such findings become a catalyst for the release of new power and energy in the body of the church, for a greater appreciation of the tradition as well as a creative response to emerging needs and circumstances through the gradual enactment of decreed, planned and carefully considered reforms?

Liturgical actions generally beg for an explanation. "Why do we say this or do that...?" Lacking sufficient information, the tendency is to invent and supply the action with one or more arbitrary symbolic interpretations, which may well defy both the structural laws of liturgy and the historical evidence. Such poor interpretations tend to be "survivors" because they are often enveloped in an aura of inauthentic "mysticism" even though they cannot express adequately what they are supposed to signify. One such action is the waving of the "aer" over the Eucharistic elements. The custom of raising and waving the *aer* over the Eucharistic elements as the creed is

being recited first appeared in the 15th century. The practice of holding it over the head of the presiding bishop at an episcopal liturgy appeared later, around the 17th century. The custom, however, has a long history and may have first appeared as early as the 6th century in Syria. Initially, the practice may have served the same function as the liturgical fans, which were waved over the Eucharistic gifts in order to keep insects away. Today, the most often quoted symbolic interpretation of the waving of the *aer* has to do with the resurrection of Christ. The *aer* is said to represent the great stone that covered the Tomb and was rolled away at the time of the Resurrection. However, such an interpretation is unrelated to the text of the Divine Liturgy.

Encouraging the Active Participation of People in Worship

Each parish is responsible for providing suitable and effective liturgical experiences capable of inducing the inner and exterior involvement of the faithful. Worship is most attractive when it is performed with faith and is characterized by simplicity, beauty, clarity, directness, solemnity and joyful dignity.

Many factors contribute to the creation of a healthy liturgical environment and meaningful experience. An inspired priestly celebration and a coherent and persuasive homily are basic factors. The reading of Scripture lessons and other liturgical texts with care and conviction is another. The graceful and dignified performance of liturgical actions is also important. The prayerful attentiveness of the congregation and its ability to respond gracefully with voice and bodily posture is another. The quality of liturgical singing is fundamental.

People love to sing. Songs fill our lives. They intensify speech, heighten action and evoke memories. Because singing is so central to the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church, we are obliged to pay special attention to the quality of our liturgical music and singing. Therefore, we have an obligation to both train and secure the services of qualified and competent chanters and music directors. More importantly, we must recognize the need and find the ways to return to the assembled worshippers their ministry of song. True worship is an act that involves the whole Body of Christ. Worship is a work of the whole people of God, clergy and laity alike. The whole Church celebrates the divine services and mysteries. No one is a mere spectator. The revival of the roles and the redefinition of the functions of historically grounded and useful institutions (such as the male and female diaconate and the so-called minor orders) will help increase our appreciation of the communal nature of public worship and our awareness of the varied gifts and talents of the members of the faith community.

Conclusion

Liturgical forms, structures and patterns, like old habits and favored articles of clothing, are not easily discarded or abandoned. They grow on us and become part of our life experiences. Therefore, I am aware that simply talking about liturgical changes and innovations is sufficient to cause feelings of distress in some people and arouse the deep displeasure of others.

However, the liturgical tradition we so honor, respect and love was never fixed. The structures, patterns and forms of our worship have been evolving gradually through the centuries.

Some changes have even been planned and decreed. The quest for the inner meaning of worship, the critical analysis of the received tradition and the search for new forms and fresh approaches to liturgical involvement are not irreverent endeavors. They are, rather, signs of a community committed to the faith and to the incarnation of the authentic living tradition of the Church in the circumstances and realities of the present age.

Father Alkiviades Calivas

