



In the Mystery of Holy Communion we are united to our Lord Jesus Christ and have Him dwelling within us. It is the spiritual nourishment that helps us continue our ascetic struggle to attain the likeness of God and perfection. Without frequent communion progress in the spiritual life is impossible. The early Christians received Holy Communion

daily thus gaining strength to endure martyrdom. The saints too, communed frequently and we too should follow their example as we are all called to become saints. The frequency with which we receive Holy Communion should be determined by our spiritual father.

In order to partake of the Sacred Body and Blood of Christ we need to prepare both our body and soul. We must cleanse our soul through confession to our spiritual father or confessor. It is only in the Mystery of Repentance and Confession that we receive forgiveness of our sins. The more regularly we go to confession the more we will progress in the spiritual life. God is Fire who illumines those who love Him and burns those who separate themselves from Him. This is why it is vital that we receive Communion in a worthy manner. For those who love God and partake in a worthy manner, Communion purifies, illumines and deifies them. Those, however, who partake unworthily without repentance and confession will suffer spiritual and even physical illness and death. As St Paul the Apostle warns, "...let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgement to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many of you are weak and sick among you and many sleep [die]. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged."(1Cor. 11:28-31)

Before approaching the Holy Chalice we must make peace with all men and give up all attachment to earthly things. The evening before we should examine consciences, our thoughts, our actions and ask God to forgive us for all the ways in which we have offended Him. We must also read the prayers in Preparation for Holy Communion. Our body must be prepared for Holy Communion by

fasting from at least midnight. Many pious Christians fast from the evening meal of the previous day or from the time of their confession if it was the evening before. Devout Christians will even abstain from food and practice self-denial for three days or more before partaking of the Mysteries. Before Communion everyone should say the communion prayer:

I believe, O Lord and I confess that Thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the living God, who camest into the world to save sinners, of whom I am first. I believe also that this is truly Thine own most pure Body and that this is truly Thine own precious Blood. Therefore I pray Thee, have mercy upon me and forgive my transgressions, both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, committed in knowledge or in ignorance. And make me worthy to partake of the most pure Mysteries, for the remission of sins and unto life everlasting. Amen.

Of thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant. For I will not speak of Thy Mysteries to Thine enemies, neither like Judas will I give Thee a kiss, but like the thief will I confess Thee: Remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom.

May the communion of Thy Holy Mysteries be neither unto my judgement, nor to my condemnation, O Lord, but to the healing of soul and body. Amen.

All Orthodox Christians should know this prayer by heart. At its conclusion we must approach the Holy Chalice having a firm faith in Christ and the benefits of Holy Communion, behaving with fear of God and reverence. We cross our hands on our breast, the right over the left. When we step before the Chalice we must clearly tell the priest our baptismal name and open our mouths wide.

We do not chew the Precious Gifts, but crush them with our tongue if necessary and swallow them as soon as possible. We then go to the side table and take a piece of prosphora. This must be eaten immediately to ensure that no pieces of the Holy Mystery remain in our mouths. Women must make sure that they have removed all lipstick before partaking of the Holy Eucharist.

After receiving Holy Communion we must remain in Church for the Thanksgiving prayers. Many people who make sincere preparation through fasting, prayer and confession quickly return to worldly realities, and immediately immerse themselves in the same worldly conversations and vanities from which they tried to free themselves in preparation for Holy Communion. Often these conversations start in the church and the communicants hurry to leave the holy place in which they had just been "partakers of the divine nature!" (2 Pet. 1:14) It is very ill mannered to receive the greatest Gift of all and leave without thanking the Giver. To do so is to imitate Judas who after receiving Communion, immediately went out and betrayed Christ with a kiss!

There is no better time to pray and converse with God than when He is dwelling inside us. Therefore we should listen attentively to the prayers of Thanksgiving. No food should be taken until at least a quarter of an hour after receiving Communion. And one should not smoke or indulge in worldly entertainment on the day of receiving Communion; for by doing so we only lose the Grace that we have received. We do not kneel or make prostrations for the rest of the day in which we received Holy Communion.

In the Orthodox Church, it is important that children also receive Holy Communion and they should be the first to do so. What is important is not whether the child

"understands" the Mystery, but the deification, which is accomplished by it. The Grace of God works independently of age and it is important that all baptized Orthodox Christians receive Holy Communion frequently (unless they are placed under penance by their spiritual father.) To avoid the danger of a young infant knocking the chalice, it must be carried by the mother, in her right arm, who should also hold the child's hands.

A note to non-Orthodox visitors:

While the Orthodox Church warmly welcomes you to attend the Divine Liturgy and other services, **only baptized Orthodox Christians may partake of Holy Communion.** For the Orthodox Church communion of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ is only open to those who adhere to the Orthodox Apostolic doctrine, morality, worship and are under obedience to the authority of the Orthodox Church.

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Receiving Holy Communion

