

The divine services and rites of the Orthodox Church, having as their foundation one typikon and preserving commonality in all that is substantially important, are extremely different one from another in practice. Not only are the customs of different countries and local Churches different, but even in the bounds of a single region, sometimes even in a single city, the customs vary greatly in churches located close to each other. More than once the question has arisen regarding the introduction of a single common abbreviated typikon which would be mandatory for all churches. However, what may be only a theoretical decision may be in reality impossible to carry out and even harmful if attempted. The difference in the carrying out of the Church typikon comes about as a result of the strength of customs that have taken root. Sometimes these customs have deeply sensible meanings, but sometimes the meanings are quite nonsensical; thus, they remain because of the zeal and determination of those who carry them out. Without a doubt, we must take into consideration that which has been accepted as sanctified custom; that is, what has been accepted from antiquity as having been established and which has entered into the consciousness not only of the clergy that carry it out but of the laity as well. However, we must give considerably less weight to that which is only common practice; that is, to that which is merely a habit of those who carry it out, not having an inner meaning and not having entered into the consciousness of the laity. We must hold onto the first as long as they are of benefit to our activity, as long as they do not contradict the Church typikon. As for the latter, one may give only a common rule: the closer it is to the Church typikon, the better. Our Church typikon is not a compilation of dead rules and it is not the fruit of some abstract desk work, it was imprinted on the spiritual experience of holy ascetics who came to fully understand the depths of the human spirit and the laws of the spiritual life. The Holy Fathers themselves experienced the battle with the infirmities of soul and body, as well as the means for their healing; they came to understand very well the path of prayerful podvig and the power of prayer. The Church typikon is a guidebook for training and schooling in prayer and the more it is adhered to the more benefit is derived from it. In the case of the inability to fulfill all that is laid out in the typikon, we must fulfill all that is in our power, preserving its general structure and main content. It is necessary, on the one hand, to fulfill the principal characteristics for a given service unchanged in its composition and that which maintains its identity separate from others. On the other hand, we must try as much as we can to fill in those parts of the service, which, changing according to the day, express the meaning and reason of the commemoration of the day's event. Divine Services combine in themselves prayer, which is lifted up to God by the faithful, the receiving of God's grace in communion with Him, and the instruction of the faithful. The latter consists of teaching through reading in the divine services and hymns, catechism, and instruction in the Christian life. The divine services in their composition contain all the fullness of the dogmatic teaching of the Church and set forth the path to salvation. They present invaluable spiritual wealth. The more fully and precisely they are fulfilled, the more benefit the participants receive from them. Those who perform them carelessly and who shorten them by their laziness rob their flock, depriving them of their very daily bread, stealing from them a most valuable treasure. The shortening of the services which comes about through

lack of strength must be done wisely and performed circumspectly in order not to touch that which should not be tampered with.

Specifically, at Vespers Psalm 103 must be read in its entirety; if it is sung it is allowable to sing only a few verses, but with majesty. Preferably, the verses of Psalms 140, 141, 129, and 116, which begin with the words "Lord, I have cried," will be always sung in full, all of the stichera absolutely. On the prescribed days it is necessary to read the Old Testament readings and to perform the Litia.

Matins must be served in the morning. Serving Matins in the evening, except for when the All-Night Vigil service is held, is not allowable because, by doing this, essentially the morning service, which is very necessary for the faithful, is abolished; even a short church attendance in the morning has a beneficial effect on the soul, while sanctifying and giving direction to the whole day. The Six Psalms are not to be shortened; also it is necessary to read the Lauds psalms in their entirety. Reading should not take the place of singing except when there is absolutely no one who is able to sing, since the effect of singing is much stronger than reading and very seldom is reading able to substitute for singing. Do not dare to leave out the Theotokia after the Troparia and other hymns, for in them is given the foundation of our faith -- the teaching of the incarnation of the Son of God and of the Divine Economy.

The Hours must be served exactly without omissions, as they are already so short. All three psalms of each Hour must be read, as well as the assigned Troparia and other prayers. At the end of each Hour special attention must be given to the prayer, which expresses the meaning of the sacred event commemorated at the given hour.

Liturgy must be served, if impossible daily, then at least on all Sundays and Church Feast days, without taking into account the number of faithful that are able to attend the service. The Liturgy is the Bloodless Sacrifice for the whole world and it is the priest's duty to serve it when required. It is positively forbidden to skip any part of the Service Book (sluzhebnik). It is also necessary to fulfill the given hymns for the Liturgy. Included are Psalms 103, 145, and 33: if Psalm 103 is shortened because of its length (although it is better not to do so), then for the days in which both of them are replaced by the antiphons. Psalm 33 is replaced only during Bright Week by the singing of "Christ is Risen"; as for the rest of the year, it is to be read or sung in view of its edification and there is no justification for its omission. Those troparia which are appointed for each given Liturgy are to be sung and in their proper order, since they are the festive part of the Liturgy. The Church typikon also refers to preserving accurately the order of the Epistle and Gospel readings. If this is adhered to, then throughout the whole year, in those churches where the services are held daily, the Gospel, as well as Epistles, will be read in its entirety. That order requires that the cyclic reading be read necessarily; its replacement by the festive readings happens only on great feast days, but even then the cyclic reading is not omitted; it is read on the preceding day, together with the ordinary readings: on medium rank feast days the consecutive and festive readings are read. The reading of only the festive readings, that is, with the omission of the ordinary, is called "irrationality" by the typikon because when this is done the whole meaning of the division of the readings in the specific order is transgressed and those who do this show their lack of understanding (of the

meaning of the divisions).

The remaining sacraments, as in all of the order of services in the Book of Needs, also must not be shortened except for dire need, and even then only by adhering to all that is essential and the order of the service, remembering one's accountability before God for the damage done to the souls of the flock by one's negligence. Everyone, while celebrating divine service, must fulfill it more precisely and with better execution so that, bringing spiritual benefit to others, he himself in the Day of Retribution may be likened to the servant who brought forth the ten talents and hear: Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things.

Published at Holy Trinity Monastery 1951.

Translated by seminarian Akim Provatakis

\*Originally published in *Orthodox Life*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (July-Aug 1991), pp. 42-45.