

February 2, 1999

The Meeting of the Lord in the Temple

Worship is the norm of Christian existence. It should be the constant disposition or attitude of the Christian man. Indeed, to worship God means precisely to be aware of His presence, to dwell constantly in this presence. It is through worship that the 'new man' is being formed in the believer, and the baptismal grace of adoption is actualized. The Christian man must be always in the state of worship, whether it is expressed in words or not. In its essence worship is the orientation of man towards God.

— *Protopresbyter Georges Florovsky (1893-1979)*

To the Right Reverend, Very Reverend and Reverend Priests, my Christ-loving sons and brothers in the Lord of the Southwest Region and the Mississippi Valley Deanery:

With blessings I embrace and greet you with a holy kiss in the name of the Lord Christ.

I have a confession to make. When I read through your parish bulletins and newsletters I make a point of studying your "calendar of events." I do this not only to see *when* events are being scheduled, but also to see *what* events are being scheduled. To be perfectly frank, I compare the number of meetings and social events you have scheduled with the number of liturgical services you will serve. Thankfully, in most of our communities the latter do indeed outnumber the former!

Bishop Kallistos (Ware) has written that "In the true Orthodox tradition there is no difference between theology and worship, between private meditation and public prayer. All genuine worship, while embracing the emotions, must also be reflective, intelligent, and essentially theological; for, as the Fathers expressed it, we are the 'logical sheep' of Christ. And at the same time all genuine theology must be a living theology — not an abstract exercise of the reasoning powers, but a vision of God's kingdom, attained first and foremost through liturgical celebration."

Your renewed zeal to make our congregations once again primarily and identifiably *worshipping* communities, coupled with the increased availability of English- language liturgical texts, has resulted in the not uncommon phenomenon of more and more of our priests desiring to serve divine services on a more frequent, and in many cases daily, basis. While both the zeal and the desire are laudable, neither guarantees that a priest possesses the knowledge to order these divine services properly. It is my prayer that this manual, *The Ranking of Feasts and Commemorations*, will be helpful to you in this area so that "all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40) to the glory of the life-giving Trinity and the salvation of souls.

Assuring you of my love, prayers and blessings, and asking remembrance in your holy and God-pleasing prayers, I remain

Your unworthy but fervent intercessor,

+ B a s i l

Titular Bishop of Enfeh al-Koura
Auxiliary Bishop for the Southwest Region and the Mississippi Valley Deanery
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

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(N.B. It will be sincerely appreciated if you would note and report to The Wichita Chancery any and all errors which you discover in this manual so that correction may be made in a future publishing.)