

HOLY APOSTLES ORTHODOX CHURCH

- **Preparation is essential for worship.**

Take care of all your personal needs before you enter the church. Once a service has begun do not leave, unless it is an emergency or to attend to a child's needs. Children should never leave without their parent or trusted adult, even to go to the bathroom. Holy Apostles has a "**safe sanctuary policy**" that no child may be unsupervised anywhere while on the Church grounds. This is a parent's responsibility. If you see an unattended child, tell father or take them to their parents (safety first). If you have to leave, use the front doors. **Do not** use the door to the community hall during services as this disrupts worship for those standing nearby.

- **Do not draw attention to yourself.**

Dress modestly: no shorts (men or women), tank (bare shoulders) or halter tops (bare midriffs) or T-shirts with writing. Keeping the ancient scriptural custom of head coverings for women is preferred but not required.

- **Preparation for communion involves a confessional relationship with the priest.** Praying the Canons and Prayers of preparation before coming to Church are optimal practices, however if you come early you will hear them prayed. If you arrive after the Epistle and Gospel readings **have begun**, realize that you are not properly prepared and you should not approach the chalice.

- **Entering the Church** is not just walking into another room. It is literally stepping out of time and into the Kingdom of Heaven. Our behavior, talk, and dress should reflect this.

- **Enter when the bells are rung.** Do not remain in the hall or outside talking. This is disrespectful to everyone already worshipping.

- **What to do first.** Upon entering the Church, bow and cross yourself three times saying, "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me a sinner", then proceed to venerate the Icons and light candles for prayers for loved ones. The pattern is to approach an Icon, cross yourself and bow twice, kiss the Icon, step to the side, then bow and cross yourself again. When you pass the royal doors, face the altar and cross yourself.

- **If the service has begun.** Do not disrupt the service (or draw attention to yourself) by venerating the Icons or lighting candles. If you cannot be on time, at least quietly find a place to join those already worshipping.

GUIDELINES FOR WORSHIP

- **When to Cross.** Generally after every prayer or litany, but not when censed or being blessed by the Priest by hand, Gospel, Cross or when receiving communion.

- **Standing.** We are at "attention". Crossing legs, leaning or standing in a slouchy manner, or hands in pockets all project a lackadaisical disinterest. Always maintain a sense of awe and attention in the presence of the King of Heaven. Stand during the Gospel and never leave or disrupt worship during the Anaphora (from the Creed through the Lord's Prayer). Try not to turn your back to the altar. When a censing is done, move out of the way but continue facing the altar.

- **Movement in the Church,** whether for communion, venerating the cross, or receiving a blessing you should always proceed in an orderly manner. Always follow the lead of the monastics if present or the person ahead of you. Never rush or push forward.

- **Thanksgiving prayers.** The Divine Liturgy is concluded with the Thanksgiving prayers. After venerating the cross, wait quietly for the final blessing. Unless you are preparing the Agape meal, do not leave until the final amen and do not start eating until it is blessed.

- **Leaving the Church.** Bowing toward the altar, making the sign of the cross and saying, "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me a sinner." Vespers/Vigil services are also concluded with the veneration of the Icons. However, if one has prepared for confession, come to the confessional (or sit in order) before venerating the icons, and then venerate them as one leaves.

- **A Word about children.** We love them and believe they should worship with us at all ages. However, our focus is worship. Please do not bring toys or dolls which can be banged on the floor. Books are best. If your child is disrupting other's worship, take the child to the Narthex or community hall until ready to return. The function of the choir, clergy and altar servers are to provide an atmosphere for worship. They are not for childcare. Altar servers must be seven years old and partaking of the sacrament of confession. Participation in the choir requires reading the words and music rapidly. If your child cannot read yet, they should not be in the choir