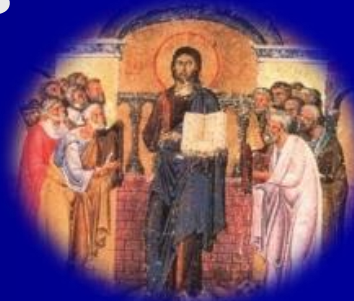


Fall 2022 Adult Study: The Early Christians

V. Rev. Nabil Hanna
Dean
St. Nicholas Orthodox Cathedral
Los Angeles, California

Session 7: Worship (Part II) –
Prayer, Feasts and Fasts

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Observances in the Old Testament

- God both ordained and commanded celebration of various feasts
 - Weekly: Sabbath
 - Monthly: New Moon
 - Annually:
 - Passover
 - Weeks/Pentecost
 - Tabernacles/Succhoth

Observances in the New Testament

- Jesus Christ Himself observed these celebrations, including the feasts of
 - Tabernacles
 - Hanukkah
 - Passover
 - Pentecost
 - Sabbath

New and Old

- Christ abolished neither the Old Testament Law nor its celebrations, but He fulfilled them.
- He took their significance to wholly a new level. He declared that the Kingdom of God had come with power.
- Celebrations and feast days are part of how we fulfill Jesus' command to go out and declare:

New and Old

- “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.” Mark 1.15
- Example of Passover – John 1.29

For example, whereas the Passover recalled the last Plague of Egypt, when the firstborn of man and beast died—except that death ‘passed over’ the homes of the Hebrews, which had been signed with the blood of a lamb—and the crossing of the Sea *en route* to the Promised Land, the Christian Passover (Pascha) observes the believer’s joining Jesus in ‘passing over’ from death to resurrection through baptism and beginning to live the life of the Heavenly Kingdom, the ultimate promised Land, through the Blood of Christ, the ultimate “Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the World” (John 1.29)

Reason for Celebration

- Though Christians are to consider themselves as not belonging to this world (cf. John 15.19), we are in this world, and we care for the world that God so loved that He gave His only-begotten Son (John 3.16).

Reason for Celebration

- Therefore, the Apostle Paul declares,
 - “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of [redeeming/sanctifying] the time, because the days are evil.” (Eph. 5.16)
 - “Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all things to the glory of God.” (1 Cor. 10.31)

Thus we are called to sanctify activities of this life, so that all of time is sanctified by being ‘punctuated’ with prayer, thanksgiving and glory to God at set points in the day, week and year. In this way, all of life becomes part of a rhythm of worship.

Instructions in the *Didache*

- “On the Lord's own day, assemble in common to break bread and offer thanks, but first confess your sins, so that your sacrifice may be pure. However, no one quarreling with his brother may join your meeting until they are reconciled; your sacrifice must not be defiled. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord: In every place and time offer to me a pure sacrifice....” (Chapter 14)

Christians pray at home, in churches and throughout the day, but the ultimate celebration is always that of the Eucharistic assembly, where we give thanks, offer our sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13.15) and participate in a Holy Communion with Christ and the whole Body of the faithful. The *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, from about 90 AD, instructs the believers: (see slide)

The great 20th-century theologian, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann summarized:

“The Church as life and grace is realized through her worship. The Greek word for worship - leiturgia - means more than common prayer: it means corporate action, in

which everyone takes an active part, is a participant and not only an 'attendant.' The nature of this action is both corporate and personal. It is corporate because through the unity and faith of its participants it realizes and fulfills the reality of the Church, i.e. the presence of Christ among those who believe in Him. It is personal because this reality is every time conveyed to me, given me for my personal edification, for my own growth in grace. Thus in worship I am both an active 'builder' of the Church - and to be this is my Christian duty - and I am also its 'beneficiary' - for the whole of the Church's treasure is offered to me, is a Divine gift to me." (Liturgy and Life, p. 23)

Sanctification of Time

- "Continue steadfastly in prayer...making the most of [redeeming or sanctifying] the time." (Col. 4.2-5)
- "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven." (Mt. 6.10)

Sanctification of Time

- "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. 5.17)
 - Three times a day (bare minimum!). Dan. 6.10; Ps. 55.17.
 - "Seven times a day I praise Thee for thy righteous ordinances." (Ps. 119.164)
 - Specific hours of prayer. Acts 3.1; 10.30; Ps. 119.62.

Sanctification of Time

- All of time is sanctified by being punctuated with prayer, thanksgiving and glory to God.
 - All of life thus becomes part of a rhythm of worship.
 - "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all things to the glory of God." (1 Cor. 10.31)
- "I appeal to you...present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is your rational (*logikos*) worship." (Rom. 12.1)

II. Cycles of Orthodox Worship and Their Corresponding Meditations

A. The Daily Cycle

1. Vespers/Lamp Lighting (6 pm)
 - a. Creation/new day--"evening and morning": Ps. 104; Gen. 1
 - b. Evening sacrifice: Ps. 141; Ex. 30.8
 - c. Removal of Jesus' Body from the Cross: Mk 15.42-47; Lk. 23.54
2. Compline/After Supper (9 pm)
 - a. "God is with us": Is. 8.8, 10
 - b. Christ is with His disciples in the Church: Jn.

6.16-17; Mt. 14.30-31

3. Midnight/Cockcrow (12 midnight)

a. Peter's denial of Jesus: Mk. 14.72.

b. "The Bridegroom cometh"--watchfulness: Mt. 25.6; Mt. 24.45-51

c. Jesus prays at Gethsemane--"watch, and pray": Mt. 26.41

4. Matins/First Hour (6 am)

d. Resurrection--Christ is the True Light: Mk. 16.2; Jn. 20.1

e. Thanks for the new day, for God's raising us up.

5. Third Hour (9 am)

a. Christ condemned and crucified: Mk. 15.25

b. Descent of the Holy Spirit: Acts 2.15

6. Sixth Hour (12 noon): Crucifixion of Christ and darkness over all the earth: Mk. 15.33; Mt. 27.45

7. Ninth Hour (3 pm)

a. The repentance of the thief and Jesus' promise of paradise: Lk. 23.43

b. Death of Jesus according to the flesh: Mk. 15.34; Mt. 27.46

B. The Weekly Cycle

1. Sunday: Resurrection, "Day of the Lord," new creation, the eighth day

2. Monday: angels (incorporeal powers)

3. Tuesday: John the Baptist (Forerunner) and all the

prophets

4. Wednesday: the betrayal of Jesus and the precious Cross (fast day)
5. Thursday: Apostles (and Nicholas of Myra); institution of the Lord's Supper
6. Friday: Crucifixion of Christ and the precious Cross (fast day)
7. Saturday: Sabbath/completion of creation; descent of Christ to hades; all saints and the departed

C. The Oktoechos Cycle

D. The Eothina Cycle - Mt. 28:16-20, Mk. 16:1-8, Mk. 16:9-20, Lk. 24:1-12, Lk. 24:12-35, Lk. 24:36-53, Jn. 20:1-10, Jn. 20:11-18, Jn. 20:19-31, Jn. 21:1-14, Jn. 21:15-25

E. The Annual Cycle of fixed feasts and fasts

F. The Paschal Cycle of moveable feasts and fasts (dependent on date of Pascha)

H. Feasts

1. Pascha - The Feast of Feasts - The Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ -

Mt. 28:1-15, Mk. 16:1-14, Lk. 24:1-11, Jn. 20:1-23

2. The Twelve Great Feasts

- a. The Nativity of the Theotokos - September 8
- b. The Exaltation of the Holy Cross - September 14
- c. The Entrance of the Theotokos to the Temple -
November 21
- d. The Nativity of the Lord Jesus Christ - December
25 - Mt. 1:18-2:23, Lk. 1:26-2:2
- e. Epiphany (Theophany) - January 6 - Mt. 3:13-17,
Mk. 1:9-11, Lk. 3:21-22, Jn. 1:29-34
- f. The Meeting of the Lord, The Presentation of
Christ in the Temple - February 2 -Lk.
2:22-40
- g. The Annunciation - March 25 - Lk. 1:26-38
- h. Palm Sunday, The Triumphal Entrance of the
Lord into Jerusalem The Sunday before
Pascha - Mt. 21:1-16, Mk. 11:1-10, Lk.
19:28-40, Jn. 12:12-19
- i. The Ascension - Forty days after Pascha - Mt.
28:16-20, Mk. 16:19, Lk. 24:50-53,
Acts 1:1-11
- j. Pentecost - Fifty days after Pascha - Acts 2:1-42
- k. The Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ -
August 6 - Mt. 17:1-8, Mk. 9:2-8, Lk.
9:28-36
- l. The Falling Asleep of the Theotokos (Dormition;
not Assumption) - August 15

I. Preparation/Pre-feast --> Feast --> Post-feast

Feasts Established on Special Occasions

We do not act like mourners during these days. Rather, we put down the appetites of our bodies in order to refresh ourselves with spiritual food. In this way we gain strength to conquer our enemies (as, for example, Judith did when she fasted and prayed before killing Holofernes and overcoming the enemies of Israel). When the whole nation of Israel was about to perish, blessed Esther defeated the tyrant's anger simply by fasting and praying to God. By faith she changed the ruin of her people into safety (Esther 4:16)! Those days are feast days for Israel (Esther 9:20—28); they used to call a feast when an enemy was slain or a conspiracy against the people was broken up, and Israel was delivered. That is why Moses established the Feast of the Passover — because Pharaoh was killed, and the people were delivered from bondage.

So then, especially when tyrants were slain, temporal feasts and holidays were established in Judea. Now, however, the devil, that tyrant against the whole world, is slain.

Therefore, our Feast does not relate only to time, but to eternity. It is a heavenly Feast! We do not announce it as a

shadow or a picture or a type, but as the real thing.

St. Athanasius the Great of Alexandria, Letter IV, 332 AD

Judith 13:8.

Judith 9.

Fasting

- "And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Matthew 6:16-18

Now the path of life is this -- first, thou shalt love the God who made thee, thy neighbour as thyself, and all things that thou wouldest not should be done unto thee, do not thou unto another. And the doctrine of these maxims is as follows. Bless them that curse you, and pray for your enemies. Fast on behalf of those that persecute you; for what thank is there if ye love them that love you? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? But do ye love them that hate you, and ye will not have an enemy. *Didache 1.2-3*

G. Fasts

1. Christmas (Advent) Fast - November 15 - December 24
2. Great Lent and Holy Week (55 days all together, inc. preparation)
3. Holy Apostles Fast - Monday, 9th day after Pentecost - June 28
4. Theotokos Fast - August 1-14
5. Day before Epiphany - January 5
6. Exaltation of the Holy Cross - September 14

7. Beheading of St. John the Baptist - August 29
8. Every Wednesday and Friday except:
 - a. The week following Pascha
 - b. The 12 days of Christmas: December 25 - January 4
 - c. The week following Pentecost
 - d. The third week before Great Lent (after Publican and Pharisee)

Fasting

- And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting." (Mark 9:28-29)

Fasting

- While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13.2-3)

Fasting

- But as for your fasts, let them not be with the hypocrites [i.e., Jews], for they fast on the second [Monday] and fifth [Thursday] days of the week, but do ye fast on the fourth [Wednesday] and sixth [Friday] days. (Didache 8.1)

Now the path of life is this -- first, thou shalt love the God who made thee, thy neighbour as thyself, and all things that thou wouldest not should be done unto thee, do not thou unto another. And the doctrine of these maxims is as follows. Bless them that curse you, and pray for your enemies. Fast on behalf of those that persecute you; for what thank is there if ye love them that love you? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? But do ye love them that hate you, and ye will not have an enemy. *Didache 1.2-3*

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Physical Aspects of Worship

■ The Sign of the Cross

- Galatians 6:17: Following a discourse on the Cross, St. Paul says, "Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus."
- Mark 8:34: " If any one would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Physical Aspects of Worship

■ Standing

- Psalm 122:1-2: "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!' Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem."
- We have been redeemed by Christ and given back our true human stature, risen from the death of sin.

Physical Aspects of Worship

- Prostrations or kneeling

- Revelation 4: St. John the Evangelist was given a vision in which he saw Christ in all His glory seated on a throne, surrounded by 24 elders and four creatures who constantly praised Him. "And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever."

Physical Aspects of Worship

- Used for both adoration of God and repentance, like the Publican of Luke 18: 9-14.
- Sitting is limited to the teaching parts of the service (Epistle, sermon, readings from the Old Testament prophecies).

Physical Aspects of Worship

■ Incense

- Psalm 141:2: "Let my prayer arise in thy sight as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."
- From Vespers: "Incense we offer unto thee, O Christ our God, as a savour of spiritual sweetness, which do thou receive upon thy most heavenly altar and send down upon us in return the grace of thine all-holy Spirit."

Physical Aspects of Worship

■ Icons

- John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father."
- Colossians 1:15: "He (Jesus) is the image (icon) of the invisible God..."

Physical Aspects of Worship

■ Candles and Oil lamps

- John 12:46: "I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness."
- Mt. 5:14-16: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Physical Aspects of Worship

■ Voices

- Psalm 5: 1-3: "Give ear to my words, O Lord, give heed to my groaning. Harken to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to thee do I pray. O Lord, in the morning thou dost hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for thee, and watch."
- Psalm 7:17: "I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High."

The most perfect instrument for worshipping God is the human voice.

"Alleluia" means "God is here, praise Him!" This expression is used throughout the liturgical services.

Physical Aspects of Worship

- Psalm 96:1-2: "O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day."
- Alleluia
 - Rev. 19:1-6: "'Alleluia! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God...!' And the 24 elders and the 4 living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated on the throne, saying, 'Amen. Alleluia!' ... Alleluia! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns."

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Physical Aspects of Worship

– Amen

- Psalm 106:48: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say 'Amen!' Praise the Lord."
- Neh. 8:6: "And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God; and all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen,' lifting up their hands."