

# THE ORTHODOX DIVINE LITURGY

## AN INVITATION TO A HEAVENLY JOURNEY



FOREWORD BY

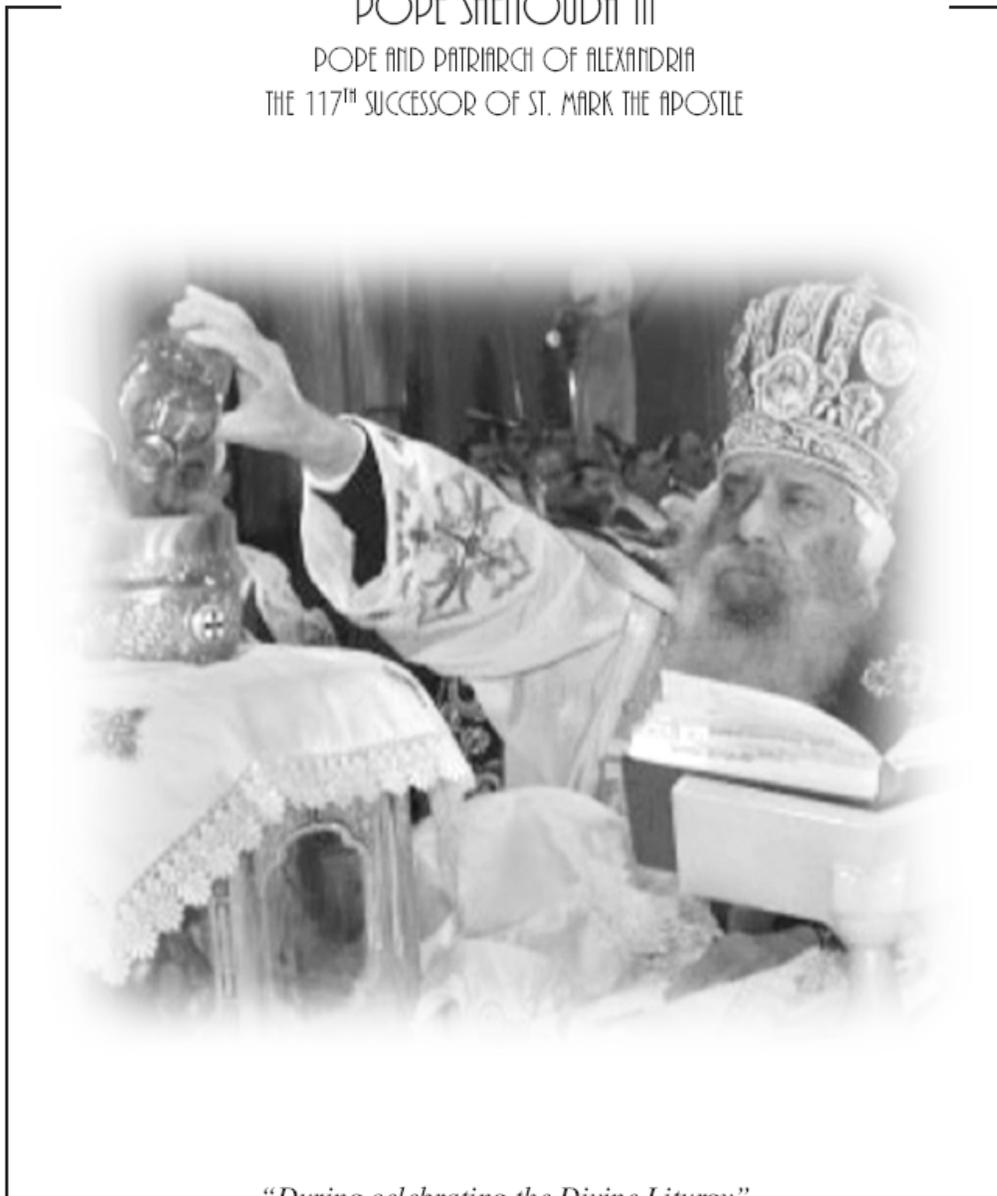
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HIS HOLINESS  
POPE SHENOUDA III  
POPE AND PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA  
THE 117<sup>TH</sup> SUCCESSOR OF ST. MARK THE APOSTLE



*“During celebrating the Divine Liturgy”*

HIS GRACE  
BISHOP YOUSSEF  
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# Table of contents

<b>Foreword</b> <i>By H.G. Bishop Youssef</i>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter One:</b> <i>Get Prepared for the Journey</i>	<b>8</b>
The Night Before The Divine Liturgy	<b>10</b>
To pray a deep prayer to God, you need	<b>12</b>
<b>Chapter Two:</b> <i>Secrets of Fulfilling Prayers</i>	<b>17</b>
The Human Layers	<b>18</b>
Who does establish the Divine Liturgy?	<b>21</b>
<b>Chapter Three:</b> What to Do In the Divine Liturgy?	<b>23</b>
Learn How to Get Into a Continuous Dialogue with God	<b>27</b>
Fellowship of Saints	<b>30</b>
The Climax Moments of the Divine Liturgy	<b>32</b>
What Do You Say Before Taking the Holy Communion?	<b>34</b>
<b>Chapter Four:</b> <i>Understanding Will Help</i>	<b>38</b>
Why does church use so many rituals and symbols?	<b>40</b>
Why Symbols?	<b>41</b>
How About Understanding the Prayers of the Divine Liturgy?	<b>43</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>47</b>

## FOREWORD

The Divine Liturgy is the greatest event that we could experience in our lives. In the Divine Liturgy, we have the Lord Jesus Christ with us bodily on the Altar. In the Divine Liturgy, the true meaning of Emmanuel (God is with us) is fulfilled.

What is heaven? It is the throne of God; and what is the Eternal life? It is to be with God always. The Divine Liturgy is a journey to the Heaven, the throne of God; it is living moments of Eternal Life while on earth “whenever we stand in Your Holy Sanctuary, we are considered standing in Heaven” (from the prayer of the third hour in the Agpeya).

In this book, the blessed deacon Victor Beshir is taking you in a journey to the heaven in which he explains to us how to prepare ourselves for this journey in a very simple and practical way. To benefit from this book, you need not only to read it but to apply the spiritual exercises written in it.

May the Lord use this book for the edification and growth of every reader. May He grant us better understanding of the glorious Mystery of the Divine Liturgy. May He reward and bless the author with the heavenly blessings through the intercession of St. Mary, the mother of God, the prayers of all the saints, and the prayers of our beloved father H.H. Pope Shenouda III. And Glory be to God forever, Amen.

*Bishop Youssef*

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## INTRODUCTION

In this booklet I am inviting you to the most joyful experience you will ever have in your life. In the following pages you will be introduced to the best ever joyful experience that richly surpasses any joy, happiness, excitements, and thrills you ever have. Try it; it is free of charge. When you enjoy it once, you will come back again and again, because you will find in it what you are longing to, for many years. This experience would be like finding yourself again and reaching peace with yourself, as you never experienced before.

Moreover, you're invited ...

It is a journey. Come aboard and let us explore what is for you in the most wonderful trip you will ever have in your life ...

The world tries to create a paradise on earth and ask you to visit it, but how about visiting the real paradise, not the false imitation of the paradise? ...

Have you ever dreamt of visiting heaven? Heaven is where the real beauty, the everlasting joy, the exalted angels, the honored saints whom we hear about, and above all where our beloved sweet dear Lord Jesus Christ ...

Are you tired of the false promises of the entertainment industry of this world and looking for a real lasting joy and peace?

How many times have you discovered that you tried worldly entertainment, then you got nothing out of it, and you left it more depressed! Then after trying so many times, you felt disappointed because you couldn't find what you were looking for. Don't be surprise of this personal experience, because actually it is a fact. Entertainment will never be able to give your heart what you're longing to ...

You will never find in it the real spring of water that comforts your soul...

This journey starts in the Divine Liturgy of the Christian Orthodox Church...

You may be amazed to hear this. But, let me share with you an old story that would help you understand. When God created Adam and Eve, he designated the Paradise as their home. This is the desire of God to let human beings live in the Paradise, where there are full happiness and everlasting joy. Man in his weakness sinned against God and was driven out of the Paradise. The Lord Jesus Christ incarnated to return us, human beings, to our home, to the<sup>1</sup> kingdom of Heaven. He established the Divine Liturgy during the Last Supper to leave it to us as a window to heaven and as a starting point for everyone who wishes to visit the heaven.

This is exactly what St. John Chrysostom tried to explain when he said: "This mystery (The Divine Liturgy) makes earth become to you a heaven."<sup>2</sup>

He also said: 'In the Eucharist (The Divine Liturgy), the cosmos can enter the new heaven.'

Now, instead of talking about the journey, how about taking some practical steps to get prepared for the journey to heaven ? Yes, believe me. I mean it, a trip to heaven. If you follow the directions mentioned in this booklet, you will visit heaven, not only once, but so many times, which will leave you with heavenly experiences full of everlasting joy which you will never forget! ...

*Deacon Victor Beshir*

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1- Our home at the second coming of our Lord is the kingdom of God. Paradise is just a waiting place until His second coming

2-The term "heaven" is used in this booklet to refer to heaven in a general term, as it has been used by St. Peter, when he said, "I saw heaven opened" (Acts 10:11) or by St. Paul when he talked about himself as been caught to the third heaven (2Cor 12:2). But, it is not used in this booklet to refer what the theologians called "The heaven of heavens," which is highest level of heaven where the throne of God exists.

Now, before starting our journey,  
we need to stop to ask a very  
important question:

***How can we get prepared  
for the journey to heaven?***

## CHAPTER ONE

# “GET PREPARED FOR THE JOURNEY”

Once, while I was visiting the city of Orlando, Florida, I stopped by a store where I saw a long line of people waiting excitedly to enter.

I asked someone: What is inside?

The answer was, 'Three dimensional experiences.'

I waited until I saw a person who had just come out of the store and asked him about his experience:

'It is wonderful ... you will have the most peaceful time and see the greatest images,' the person said.

'This is marvelous,' I said, 'but, what did you do?'

He answered: 'They let you sit on a chair for about ten minutes in a very quiet room with dim lights, asking you to close your eyes and try to remember pleasant experiences you had before. You need to relax and let yourself fall in your chair.'

What this person explained are preparations ...

To experience the greatness of the three dimensions, you have to prepare your mind and your soul too. If you refuse the preparations or resist the instructions, you will never enjoy the thrill of the experience.

Similarly, to get into the heavenly journey you need to prepare yourself too. Without this preparation you can't enjoy the thrill of heaven; and again, I mean it when I say the thrill of heaven. In the following chapter, I'll let you know what you can do to prepare yourself for the heavenly journey. Just in case ... if you forgot what I already started with, you will join a heavenly journey during the Divine Liturgy. This means we are going to get prepared for attending the Divine Liturgy. You may be surprised of what I just said and think that I'm not realistic. But, what I am going to reveal to you have been experienced by numerous people like you, actually by millions over the centuries. So, don't hesitate and don't stop reading, just come aboard and experience it for yourself.

### **The Night Before The Divine Liturgy:**

The preparations should start even before the Divine Liturgy begins. You may ask why? The answer is simple. Have you ever prepare for a trip on the same day? Can you make reservations for airlines and hotels, invite people, and get maps all in the same day of the journey? Of course not.

Similarly, the journey to heaven needs preparation, and this preparation starts the night before the Divine Liturgy. But, how? You need to spend the night before the Divine Liturgy in a quite atmosphere ... away from loud music, exciting movies, and long hours of surfing the Internet. To see a few three-dimensional figures, you have to have a quite place and mind for ten minutes. Then, to see heaven, you will need much more quietness and time.

You may interrupt me, asking:

*‘What I am going to do in quietness?’*

There are a few things that you can do, like:

To start with, I say it would be a great idea not to only attend the Divine Liturgy, but also to partake from the Holy Mysteries (The Communion, the holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ), which means you would be united with Christ...Therefore, you need to prepare yourself for this unity, by asking yourself simple questions, such as:

**D**id I commit any sins in my life that I need to confess before God and repent? ... And who doesn't commit sins? We all are sinners and we all in need for His forgiveness. Let us approach God humbly with sincere feelings of repentance during the night before the Divine Liturgy. Sins are like a heavy load on your shoulder that constrains your movements toward God, and you need to take them off your shoulder before you can walk freely toward God and His heaven.

**D**id I confess my sins? First step in repentance is repenting before God, then, second step is confessing before God in the presence of the servant of His mysteries, the priest,

since He gave him the authority to forgive. Listen to what the Lord says: ‘If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained’ (John 20:23). Confessing your sins and hearing the words ‘God absolve you from your sins’ from the priest would confirm to you God’s forgiveness of your sins. Actually, it would help to arrange for confession before this night and reserve the night before the Divine Liturgy in being alone with God.

**A**m I facing a vigorous spiritual battle with one of the sins or the evil desires? It tempts me and leads me away from God! If so, tonight is the night to struggle with God in prayers asking for His strength and setting you free from this sin or desire.

**D**o I have sincere wishes to follow Him, but the devil and the world follow me and get me back every time I decide to walk with God? Then, tonight open your heart to God and tell Him about all your feelings and your deep desire to follow Him.

**D**o I think I have failed in my spiritual life? Did I get tired of myself –a feeling that crushed me, failed me, and led me astray? If so, complain to God from yourself and ask Him to liberate you from the leadership of yourself. Invite Him to be the leader of your life.

**Second thing you need to do the night before the Divine Liturgy is to *PRAY*.**

When you hear the word pray, I know that you may tell me this secret:

“My prayer always weak and never pass beyond the ceiling of my room?” ...

“I don’t feel any thing when I pray ... It feels as if I speak to myself or I speak into the air ... “

Yes, my friend, I know that. Here I am going to tell how to experience wonderful fulfilling prayers, just follow what I am going to say honestly.

**To pray a deep prayer to God, you need:**

- A quiet place with dim lights.
- Kneel down or stand up with open arms and closed eyes.
- Believe that God is everywhere, and He listens to you.
- He cares about you as a kind Father.

*(I am going to add a few more, just hang up ... don't stop here)*

**Now, what can you do?**

- Speak your mind in a deep way.
- Open your heart. Speak from the bottom of your heart, and tell Him of your needs, your problems, your struggles, and your ups and downs. In one word, tell Him about everything bothering you.
- Don't prevent yourself from crying or weeping, when it happens.
- Don't hide anything from God. He knows about everything in your life. Hiding will not help. Revealing what you have is a first step to healing from sin.

**What about some feelings?**

You ask me, 'What do you mean?'

Let me answer your question by asking you some questions:

**Did you miss God in your life?**

Has your heart been longing to God?

If so, why not make the night before the Divine Liturgy a night to tell Him about your love for Him ...

It is a night when you can express all your feelings towards your beloved God.

**Are you angry with God?**

You may be angry with God because of certain events that took place in your life and impacted you since then. You are angry with Him, because you think He should have been interfered and prevented the events from happening, or found a better way out for you.

You have this anger in your life for a long time, which troubles you. ....

Tonight is a night to ask Him to help you to defuse this anger and give you your lost peace.

### **Have you been defeated by certain sins or evil desires?**

Some people have a bleeding heart because of a sin or an evil relationship in their lives that mandate their lives and turn into a hell...

Yes, there are moments of pleasures in sin, but after you go home and be alone comes that screaming voice inside you like a thunder. I know people cry their eyes out to bed, although they look very happy to others. Are you one of those people?

Others, after failing to face their guilt, started to shut up all the conscience's voice inside them by giving themselves excuses. All excuses will not stand before God in the Last Day. God will judge us based on His word in the Bible, but not by using your standards or your friends' analysis or even by the world's way of living.

But, I have good news!

You can get rid of all your evil habits.

You will have victory over the sin that enslaved you for such a long time.

#### **How?**

I know someone whom we all trust who says:

“Come to Me, all you have labor and are heavy laden, **and I will give you rest**” (*Matt 11:28*).

Over the course of history millions have experienced how God led them to victory. Just listen to one of them, “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ” (*2Cor 2:14*) Again, listen to those celebrating words that express what our beloved Lord does for us, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (*Rom 8:37*)

### **So, What Can I do About My Dominated Sins?**

Come humbly to Him and ask heartily for His rest and His victory over your sinful habits.

Ask Him sincerely to set you free ...

Entreat Him to empower you against sin and the devil

Once you have done this, go and confess your sins before a priest.

Let me suggest a few **companions for this night:**

1- Your Bible:

Read some chapters from the Bible to listen to the voice of God.

2-Your spiritual songs & hymns:

Sing some uplifting spiritual songs that touch your heart and get you closer to God.

3-Your Prayers:

Pray some of the hourly prayers, and also pray some spontaneous prayers, in which you express all your feelings to God: love, longing, wishes ...etc.

4- Spiritual readings:

Read some spiritual books, especially those ones about the life of the repented saints.

I am not saying that you need to do all the above four items, but mainly I am trying to get you closer to God by whatever means that are close to your heart. If you follow one and this one let you get deeper into your heart and you feel it gets you closer to God. Then, you reached the goal. Whenever, you feel you need to talk to Him, put everything aside, including this book, and start praying deeply and stay in His presence as much time as you can. Let time pass easily without interrupting your prayers. Enjoy those golden moments with Him. Just ignore those thoughts that try to take you away by bringing up some things you need to finish or matters you need to think about.

My dear friend, if you follow the simple instructions that I mentioned so far; then you will prepare yourself for the journey to heaven ... Just let me remind you with a very valuable note:

God is interested in you.

He loves you dearly, more than you think. ... Just remember He died for you.

He waits eagerly for you more than you long to Him

His grace is waiting for you to start your first step in your journey to Him to help you in every step all the way.

Therefore, just take the first step, and His grace would be your companion.

Let me close this chapter by a few words for those who are advanced in their love to God; of course, I'll not forget them. Tomorrow you will be united with Christ, through eating and drinking of His mysteries. Think of what a bride might feel and think of, during the night before her wedding. Certainly, she would be very happy because the next day is the day she was waiting for eagerly. She will be united with her bridegroom; then she will be with him all the time without interruptions, enjoying him and his love.

My friend, the next day you will also be united with your heavenly bridegroom. How eager are you to be united with Him? What a joyful night for you when you think of tomorrow when you will embrace God in your heart, and open your mouth to accept His Body and His Blood. Think of how you will receive Him during those great moments. Thank Him for His great love that He will come to you, to be in you and let you be in Him. Meditate on the cross, where His love for you was manifested; the same sacrifice that would be available tomorrow on the altar.

HIS HOLINESS  
POPE KYRILLOS VI  
POPE AND PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA  
THE 116<sup>TH</sup> SUCCESSOR OF ST. MARK THE APOSTLE



*"During celebrating the Divine Liturgy"*

There are some secrets behind  
the successful rewarded fulfilling prayers.  
Knowing them would open your eyes to see  
the hidden door of the Paradise.  
Let us try to find them in this chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

# SECRETS OF FULFILLING PRAYERS

### **Where to go to find the secrets of fulfilling prayers?**

I hear you saying: ‘Of course, to search in the Bible, the guide to our spiritual life.’

Great answer! Then you may ask, ‘Where in the Bible? And I will not find a better teacher than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself to answer this question. Listen to what He says when He talks about worship, which includes prayers:

Please, open your Bible to *John 4: 21-26*, where you can read: *“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”*

Then, what is the secret to a heavenly worship?

The Lord reveals the secret when He says ‘must worship in spirit and truth.’ So, to enjoy heavenly prayers, you need to pray in spirit and truth.

### **But, What Does Pray in Spirit Mean?**

To answer this question, we need to understand something about the nature of human being. In the next figure you will see a drawing that explains the layers of the human nature. Please pay attention to the three boxes inside each other. The outer box is the Black box, then inside this blue box there is another dark gray box, and then the internal light gray box.



*The Human Layers*

The drawing represents the three layers in the human nature. To understand them, think of three boxes located inside each other. The outer box represents the human Body, inside this box is another box, which represents the human soul, and then finally inside the human soul box is the human spirit box.

As a result, we have three layers in the human nature:

- The first is the FLESH, the outer layer that we face the world with, and through it we communicate with others using the five senses (These are our windows to the world).
- The second internal layer is your soul, where your emotions are stored. Here where you keep what you like or dislike; what you love; what you envy; ...etc.
- The third internal layer is your spirit. This is the deepest part inside you, where your spirit lives.

Back to the illustration of the three boxes inside each other, the outsider one is the flesh, the deepest internal one is the spirit, and the soul is in between the two. All your communications starts with the flesh, some deep ones could reach your soul, and a very few may go all the way from the layer of the flesh to the layer of the soul and then finally knock at the door of the spirit.

Still confused, let me give you a good example. When you listen to a song or a hymn for the first time, you just listen and probably you don't pay much attention to the lyrics or to the tunes. Second time you listen to the same song you start paying attention to the words. A few times later, you feel you like the words and the tunes really touch you. Later on, whenever you hear the song again, it creates some emotions inside you. Here the song passes from just listening, i.e. from the flesh layer, to emotions or to the soul layer. It makes you happy or sad or it may fill your eyes with tears. Afterwards, listening to the same song can take you to a different world where you stay there as if you totally forget about people and everything around you. Now the song reached the third layer, the spirit.

Long time ago, my friends and I whenever we wanted to give a good birthday gift to someone we like, we used to prepare it in a special way. We gave the person a decorated gift box. The person opened the box to find the gift, but to his surprise he found instead another box inside the first box. He smiled and started to open the new box to get to the gift, but again he found a third box inside the second box. Finally, when he opened the third internal box, he found a marvelous gift. After that the person usually responded by saying, 'Oh ... it took me a while to go through three boxes. Nevertheless, it is worth it. The gift is great. Thank you.'

Similarly, to get the best gift from God, we need to go through the three layers inside us, very similar to the three boxes inside each other we talked about. Now if you go back and review the drawing, it would make more sense.

After understanding the human nature, now we can go back to our discussion about:

### **The secrets of the fulfilling prayer**

The Lord Jesus Christ says that worship, which includes prayers, should be in the SPIRIT.

We tried to find where the spirit is in the human nature and we concluded that it is located in the most inner layer in our nature. Therefore, for a prayer to reach the SPIRIT, it should not only pass through the FLESH, but also to be strong enough to pass to the SOUL and then to reach the most inner part of a person, the SPIRIT.

If you still remember the example of the song that I used earlier, probably now you may realize the wisdom behind repeating almost the same prayers and hymns in every Divine Liturgy. If the prayers of the Divine Liturgy every time are totally different, then most likely it would go through the FLESH layer only and would

stop there. However, repeating the same Divine Liturgy each time is not as you think that it may be boring or repeating prayers in vain. To the contrary, this is done this way based on a deep understanding of the human nature that allows the prayers to go from the FLESH to the SOUL, where it creates emotions, and then finally to the SPIRIT where we can worship in SPIRIT, as the Lord requested.

### **Who does establish the Divine Liturgy?**

It is the Lord Himself, when in the Last Supper ‘He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them (His disciples), saying “**This is My Body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me**” (*Luke 22:19, 20*). Since it is His commandment to repeat it, the church has kept repeating the Divine Liturgy from the days of the Apostles until now. Therefore, this repeating is based on His order for the great spiritual enlightenment of the human soul.

In other words, He asks us to worship in SPIRIT, and then He shows us how to worship in SPIRIT through repeating the Divine Liturgy. Therefore, to reach the depth of worship in SPIRIT, we need to discover it in the depth of the Divine Liturgy. Once the person trains himself or herself to worship in SPIRIT in the Divine Liturgy, then training to do the same in other kind of prayers would be much easier.

When you pray in SPIRIT in the Divine Liturgy, which means you let prayers and hymns to go deeper inside yourself where the SPIRIT lies, you would start the heavenly journey that would fill your life with everlasting peace and joy.

### **Does it sound hard to achieve?**

Absolutely not! It comes naturally as part of our human nature when we just give it a chance; similar to the song example I gave before. Now let me ask you: Is it hard to get a song or a hymn to the SOUL then to the SPIRIT layers?

Of course not! The reason is God created our human nature with open passages between the FLESH, the SOUL, and the SPIRIT layers.

In addition, we can't speak of the prayer in SPIRIT without referring to the grace of God that helps people to pray in SPIRIT. It is the pleasure of God that we pray in SPIRIT; therefore, He helps any person who thought seriously about using this prayer. Listen to what St. Paul says:

“Likewise, the Spirit also helps us in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered” (*Romans 8:26*).

**Now, what do you think?**

Our human nature was created to fulfill the purpose of prayers ... and more over, the Spirit of God Himself makes intercession in our behalf to enable us to pray in SPIRIT. Then, we should all get encouraged and don't hesitate to come aboard to start this significant journey into heaven, as we would talk about it in more details in the following chapter.

Do you know that you have a weekly free invitation to visit heaven? Our beloved God sends this invitation to you to enjoy heaven with all its splendor and angelic atmosphere. This chapter talks about how you can join this great journey to heaven.

### CHAPTER THREE

## WHAT TO DO IN THE DIVINE LITURGY?

Before answering this important question, let me ask you, have you visited Disney Land?

If you did, then you experienced the magic and beauty of Disney Land. Walking in Disney as walking in a beautiful dream you don't like to be awoken from. However, all this thrilled experience falls short when it compared with visiting heaven, because the beauty of heaven is beyond all our imagination and fantasy. It is made by the Creator Himself to live in with His own people forever. Just imagine a king who likes to build a palace for himself to live in it; surely, he will ask the best engineers to design it, and use the best and most significant materials in building it. In short, he makes it as his own paradise to enjoy living in.

Now let us shift to God. He prepared heaven to dwell with His own people as a reward for their love; therefore, how beautiful heaven could be! To find an answer, let us listen to St. Paul, one of the greatest writers of the Bible. After his visit to the Paradise, he tried hard to describe the Paradise using all his great writing skills, but he couldn't find sufficient words that can describe the Paradise, so he had to summarize its beauty in one sentence: **"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived"** (*1Cor 2:9*).

In other words, there are no words available in our earthly languages to describe its beauty. Our languages can describe these magnificent mountains, beautiful lakes, and amazing sunset, but when it comes to spiritual beauty they fall shorts, simply because spiritual beauty is beyond any language capabilities. Only the pure spirits can see, hear, and are touched by its beauty in such joyful methods that surpass all our imaginations.

Let us start our journey to this amazing, above description, and beyond imagination heaven.

### **What to do to enjoy the trip?**

In the Morning:

- 1- Get up early, and start your day with a prayer full of expressing your longing to your beloved God.
- 2- In your way to church, keep yourself calm, and if possible say some short spontaneous prayers or pray psalms that talk about the house of God.
- 3- Avoid getting into arguments with others. Usually the devil tries to make people angry with each other to blow out their inner peace.
- 4- The devil may try to create obstacles to stop you from going to church, starting from feeling sick to some phone calls asking for help; however, you need to be strong and resist even feeling sick. If you listen to these thoughts, you will discover later on the day that they were just tricks. I saw people think they're sick on Sunday's morning and in a few hours they're healthy as never before!

### **Be Happy ... It is a day for a thrilled journey to heaven**

Do you know what I mean?

When people enter Disney Land, how happy are they?

I like you for a moment to visualize young people in their first steps in the Disney Land... I can see them not walking but jumping of joy and their faces tell about their great joy. They're eager to start right away and get into rides, one after another, and in each they will do whatever it takes to enjoy it.

They scream sometimes, shout other times, close their eyes part of the time, raise their hands up while rides go down, and in certain rides they hold on bars firmly. All in all they act differently so that they enjoy every ride during its span of running.

Although, Divine Liturgy is different from Disney Land in many aspects; however, they both are similar in having rides. Disney have rides that go up and down or go in circles, but rides of the Divine Liturgy go in one direction only, up to heaven. However, we can apply the same principles of enjoying the ride to both. In other words, you will find in the Divine Liturgy some similarities, here are some examples:

- 1- In some prayers, you find people raise their hands up, you ought to do the same
- 2- People kneel down, don't think this is hard or it is unnecessary, just do it
- 3- From time to time people sign themselves with the sign of the cross, do the same
- 4- In other time people close their eyes, don't be afraid to do the same
- 5- Most of the time people stand up, don't think your legs would get tired, just stand up. People visiting Disney spend hours after hours in riding but never feel tired because of the perception of joy, similarly you will not feel tired if you're in thrill of the spirit, which is achievable if you follow the simple ways I mentioned in this booklet.

Therefore, the first lesson to learn is:

**To Get the Benefits of the Divine Liturgy,  
Follow What Others Do in the Divine Liturgy**

It is a simple rule, however, with great benefits. Probably you don't question why young people in the Disney Land do what we mentioned above, but you do it and find great enjoyment. Remember to do the same here for now, let understanding comes later, if it is needed.

I visited once a castle, among many visitors, and to my surprise I found the queen of the castle was standing at the door to greet each visitor. So, each visitor bows down and kisses the hand of the queen. I have been told later that this is the custom. Since the queen of the castle is the most important person in the castle, people give her all the respect and attention during all the time of the visit, from the moment they step into the castle until they leave for good.

Similarly, when you enter the church remember the most important person there, who is without doubt is God. Give Him all your respect and attention all the time, from the moment you enter the church until you leave. Here is the secret of the church:

**The more attention you give to God,  
The more blessings you get  
And the more spirituality you will enjoy**

Nevertheless, some people meet all their friends and others in the church, but they don't meet God, and as a result they never enjoy any spirituality in the church. Instead of having joy in the church, to the contrary, the time of the church is a boring time for them and it will continue to be until they learn to pay attention to God all the time they're in the church. I almost heard you asking:

**How Can I Give My Attention to God?**

Some may even say secretly in my ears that you just pray to God for a few minutes and then you don't find words or feelings and you stop!  
The answer is simple ...

**Learn How to Get Into a Continuous Dialogue with God**

To reach to this level of dialogue, you need to do the following simple things:

- 1- Come to the church with a longing heart for God, as you do when you go to see a close friend who was away for sometime.
- 2- Prepare a list of a few things you need to talk to God about and pray for; I don't mean writing a list in a piece of paper, but things you decide you need to pray for.
- 3- Talk to Him about your personal need to Him
- 4- Mention things that touch your heart, like your longing to have a victory in your spiritual life or your desire to overcome a sin which irritates your life.
- 5- Talk to Him about your love to Him and His unconditional love for you as a Father.
- 6- Mention you memories of how He took good care of you.
- 7- Thank Him for being in such a holy place while you're not worthy
- 8- Use all prayers you hear from the priest or deacons as prayers subjects. For example, the priest mentions the salvation on the cross; raise your heart to thank God for His salvation. When the priest remembers the passions of the Lord on the cross then tell

God that You suffered all these afflictions because of my iniquities and start confessing all your sins.

9- Use the icons around you as introductions to prayers. The church is full of icons of Christ: His birth, crucifixion, last supper, resurrection, and ascension into heaven...etc. Talk with God about each event and how this affects your life.

10- Listen to the readings, apply them to your life, and then make them subjects of dialogue.

11- Watch the rituals and turn them into prayers. The prayers are full of rituals that you can use. One example, when the priest breaks the bread, remember how Christ's body was broken because of the slashes, nails, and the crown of thorns. Say to yourself and to God that all these happened because of my sins.

12- The hymns and the songs in the Divine Liturgy works as stairs that can help your soul to move up to God. So, listen carefully to them, understand them, sing them, and let them get absorbed into your heart and soul. Let them get to the deepest part of you, your spirit (as we explained before about the three layers of a human being).

**The main point is to make Him the center of your attention during the whole time and use every prayer, every icon, every ritual, every reading, and all your requests and feelings to hold this continuous dialogue with God.**

Could this happen immediately?

For most people, it takes time and efforts to reach a continuous dialogue for a long time. However, if you have sincere feelings towards God, you will get the blessing even from your first time; you will feel that you were not on earth but you were in a wonderful spiritual world. You will feel the warmth of God welcoming you into His presence. God's touch to the heart, even from the first time, brings an unimaginable joy.

Now, let me try to visualize you getting into the church, starting a dialogue with God and succeeding for a short time; you really enjoy it very much. Great, but don't stop here. Try to increase the length of this time by doing simple things, such as:

- Listen more carefully to prayers
- Watch closely all the rituals
- Follow up prayers using the Divine Liturgy book.

When you go home, try to read about the interpretation of the prayers and the rituals, the more you know the longer and deeper your prayer, you will have with God.

Little by little you will notice that you talk more and more to God. Then you will witness that you talk with God not with words alone but with deep feelings. More emotions will come into the dialogue; there are tears in your eyes. Those tears are not tears of sadness and are not depressing tears; to the contrary they bring up deep peace into your heart and make you feel much closer to God.

One day you while you're busy with this dialogue, all of the sudden you may find silence. Your tongue and your heart stop talking or whispering, but instead you find your eyes are focused looking to heaven, your body has no movements. Moments of silence fall on you, a deep sweet silence accompanied with great joy, silence of everything in you. They seem as a few moments, but actually they're much longer time. You love those moments and wish they last forever. When you experience this feeling, you wish if the priest and deacons can go on and on without stopping. You enjoy it very much; you really experience a piece of heaven.

Those, who through deep prayers and training on keeping the dialogue, will reach this touch with God and other great experiences that will take me long time to talk about each. No matter what kind of experience, since God Has His own ways of touching each person, the bottom line is that touching of God is a thrill beyond all thrills and lasts much longer with you. Moreover, it gives new perspectives to life that make it deeply meaningful and fulfilling. Keeping dialogue with God during the Divine Liturgy is a ladder to our beautiful thrilling home in heaven. Once you touch it, you will long to come again and again to the Divine Liturgy, where Divine Liturgy would be a journey to heaven each time you attend.

## **Fellowship of Saints**

As many saints said, the church is the ship of salvation; a ship to ride to move you from one place to another greater place. Even in the old days they used to build the church in the shape of a ship. We enter the church, the ship, to travel far away, to go to heaven and enjoy the ride and heaven too.

First thing you notice when you enter an Orthodox Church is the icons displayed or hanged all over, to your left and to your right, in front of you and in the back, on the ceiling and on the windows. The icons have pictures of those saints who already enjoyed heaven while they were on earth and now they dwell in heaven; however, they still visit earth to offer help to the faithful. In other words, they were not separated from us when they passed the way, but they-out of love-continue to be around to support us in our daily life and in our journey to heaven. Their ears are open to your requests. In facts, their hearts are open for you before their ears.

Some of the few places the departed saints come to visit so often are churches, especially during the Divine Liturgy. Have you ever heard of a king or a president visit a place alone? Of course not, he comes with his aids, counselors, and a full team. Now think of Lord Jesus Christ coming to be the bread in the Divine Liturgy, do you think He will come alone? Based on visions seen by many spiritual people, they saw angels and saints surrounding the Lord during the Divine Liturgy.

### **The Saints Are Available:**

They're in the church. Just open your mouth and start your short dialogue with them, talk to them quietly from your heart; they will listen not only to your words, but also to your feelings, sighs, and even to the cries of your heart. Their presence is a spiritual power that helps you to move from the all-materialistic world to the spiritual world. They are also companions in our journey to heaven.

### **How About Some Concentration?**

Do you still remember what I mentioned about the three dimensions experience?

It needs concentration. Divine Liturgy also needs concentration. When too many disturbances happen around you, you will lose concentration, and subsequently you will lose your dialogue with God. This will lead us to ask a very important question:

### **How to Reach Concentration in Prayers in the Divine Liturgy?**

1- Avoid sitting next to friends or relatives who talk or move a lot or make you lose concentration.

2- Sit far away from doors and places with many traffics.

3- Sit in a quiet place

4- Don't overload yourself with many services or activities during the Divine Liturgy that could make your continuous dialogue with God almost impossible.

5- Stand close to a place that attracts you spiritually, like an icon or a cross.

6- Let your face fixed on the altar or an icon, but never allow your eyes to look at people

7- Get into deep prayers from the first moments you're in the church

8- Don't worry about what others may say about you

9- Learn to close your eyes.

10- Pay attention to the words and lyrics of the hymns and the songs. Concentration will help in passing them to the SOUL and then to the SPIRIT without troubles.

I have a word for deacons; don't get so busy with arrangements and preparations of things that you lose your dialogue with God. Also, don't concentrate on your beautiful singing and how people will praise it because once you concentrate on yourself, you lose your prayers. Instead, pray heartily to help people raise their hearts to God too. You're a leader, and others follow your example, so don't move unnecessarily and pray in the fear of God.

## **The Climax Moments of the Divine Liturgy**

All these longing to God during the whole Divine Liturgy poured toward the most fearful, yet joyful moments of the Divine Liturgy that is the partaking of the Holy Communion. This is the time when we, faithful, unite with Christ, confirmed in Him and He in us.

These moments are similar to a wedding. He is the bridegroom and we are the bride. Although, the eternal wedding would be held in the “Wedding of the Lamb” (Rev 19:9), yet we experience foreshadow of this wedding in the Holy Communion, where we taste how beautiful and joyful is the unity with our Lord Jesus Christ (I apologize because I can’t find the right words that can describe the heavenly moments).

This is why we prepare ourselves for those golden moments of the Holy Communion through long preparations:

- 1- Live according to the Gospel of Christ, and when we feel we fail in certain aspects, we repent to God, asking for His forgiveness.
- 2- Then we go to the priest, God’s mysteries servant, to confess in order to get the absolution from our sins, as God gives the priest the authority to forgive sins when He says, **“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained”** (*John 20:23*).
- 3- During the Divine Liturgy, the priest prays “The prayer of absolution” many times to ensure that everyone was absolved from his/her sins that he/she committed since their last confession and other sins that we committed however we are not aware of it.
- 4- People confess their sins and weakness to God during the Divine Liturgy
- 5- Faithful ask God to purify their hearts, bodies, thoughts, senses, and souls so that they may be worthy to partake from the Holy Mysteries.

My dear friend, make it a habit to talk to God about the following during the Divine Liturgy:

- + Tell Him about your sins and you're ashamed to stand before Him because of your sins.
- + Talk to Him about the spiritual warfare that drags you to sin, and ask heartily for His support.
- + Confess your weaknesses before Him, asking for a power from Him to overcome them.
- + Feel your unworthiness. Tell Him over and over that you're unworthy and a sinner. Let your heart cry to Him; hearts can speak more eloquently without words to express our deepest feelings.

Probably you're a deacon or a Sunday school's teacher; please always remind yourself with the following:

I am unworthy to stand in this holy place...

As a deacon, I am not worthy to put on this white pure garment ... Although, many people consider me as a teacher of others in the church or a servant in Sunday School or as deacon or a religious person, but I am a sinner who comes to the church begging for God's mercy. I know myself more than any one else.

But, be careful, because that does not mean you're hopeless or a hypocrite.

Because I know I am weak and I work hard to be better, relying on the grace of God.

I don't use this weak nature as an excuse to sin, because I already hate sin that separates me from beloved God.

I never lose hope and trust in God's forgiveness, no matter how bad are my sins or for how long they have been in my life. God is the heavenly Father who looks at our hearts and read our desires to live with Him.

I know that I will have a victory over sin no matter how many times sin wins a small round. The ultimate victory is mine by the grace of God which will never forsake me.

No one is truly worthy; our worthiness comes from His sacrificial blood on the cross. No matter what I do, nothing will

forgive my sins, because sin is against God's righteousness and its result is death. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can forgive sins, and this is why I come to partake of the Holy Communion. So, although I am a sinner but I come to the right place at the right time to take communion and to have forgiveness of my sins.

If nobody is worthy to partake of the Holy Communion, then why all the talk about confessing our sins? Simply, although nobody is worthy, however, we need to show God our readiness to follow His way. We need to surrender our life to Him so He can change our bad habits, sinful ways, and awful desires by His grace that helps our efforts.

### **What Do You Say Before Taking the Holy Communion?**

What can I say, because I am bewildered...?

I am longing to take the Holy Communion to be united with my God and Savior and my love, because I love Him dearly. He is my life and my destiny.

However, I am unworthy because of my sins.

Then, what can I do?

The Bible carries the perfect answer for me that comfort me, **“Take, eat; this is My body. Drink from it, all of you. For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remissions of sins”** (*Matt 26: 26- 28*).

In other words, my dear beloved Lord is telling me: Take, eat, and drink.

What a wonderful invitation comes from my Lord to me as a sinner. Then He continues to tell me that it is for the “remissions of sins.”

So, these words reveal to me that my beloved Lord tells me:

I know you're a sinner,  
but, come on, take, eat, and drink,  
because my blood will not only forgive your sins,  
but will erase them completely.

You see how sweet is my Lord ... Sometimes I cry not because of fear of punishment of God, but because of the tenderness and mercy of God. It touches me that while I forget Him and commit sin, He loves me and offers me the remedy, His mysteries. I never have seen such love!

### **The Glorious Moment of Taking the Holy Communion**

In the Orthodox Church, we believe that what we take in the Holy Communion is the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. After all, no one invented this but Christ himself declares it, listen to what He says:

**“For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him”** (*John 6: 55, 56*).

Therefore, when I walk towards the mysteries, I am full of joy. I will abide in Him.

He will dwell in us.

His blood will be mixed with my blood to give me life, as He explains,

“Unless you eat the flesh of Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.

Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (*John 6: 53, 54*).

What a joy to know these facts, but the real joy you will experience when you take the Mysteries, the body and blood of Jesus Christ. He will be your ultimate joy.

With all of joy accompanies taking the mysteries but there is a sense of awe, a feeling of unworthiness, a mouth full of prayers asking for forgiveness.

Here are some prayerful thoughts before taking the Holy Communion:

**I am a sinner, but forgiveness is in your mysteries,  
therefore I come to you ...  
I am unclean because of my sins,  
but your mysteries will wash me inside out...  
So I come to your mysteries ...  
While I don't deserve You neither Your mysteries,  
But as a sick person comes to take  
Your heavenly medications,  
Your mysteries;  
As a spiritually dead person because of my sins  
I come to Your mysteries to receive life  
As a thirsty person to Your grace I approach  
Your mysteries to water my spirit  
As a weak person I walk to get the source of power,  
Your mysteries.**

There are a few prayers mentioned in the book of Agpyia (The Seven Prayers Book) or other books, you may need to pray them before and after taking the Holy Communion.

I think by now you're ready for the journey to heaven. I am sure you have not only desire to do so but also a thirst deep in your spirit for spirituality which you will quench soon when you pray the Divine Liturgy. The journey is fantastic and the reward is so great. Lastly, remember Christ invites you to this journey so come aboard.

THE LATE  
BISHOP MINA  
BISHOP OF ST. MINA MONASTERY, EGYPT



*"During celebrating the Divine Liturgy"*

CHAPTER FOUR  
UNDERSTANDING WILL HELP

As a young person, I was not fond of soccer, actually I never appreciated it and I always was wondering why people got so excited about it until one time I visited a friend who was watching soccer game on TV. Because I need to talk to him, I had to stay there. He was watching not with his eyes only but I saw his body moved with the movements of players, and the more they came closer to the goalkeeper, the more excited he got. He stood up, came closer to the TV set, and was pounding his hands as if he was boxing with someone. I watched all these while wondering why my friend was so overwhelmed by the game. While I was deeply sinking in my thoughts, he screamed loudly and started jumping all over the place shouting, goal ... goal ... goal.

After he quieted down himself, I asked him about his sudden shouting. During break, he bought a piece of paper and started to explain the soccer game. As a good teacher, he explained the plot each team tries to apply to win; how the attackers and defenders coordinate with each other to reach their goal, and how cleverly one team can break the defense lines of the other team. I was impressed. Going back to watching the game, I found myself getting excited when one team came closer to the goalkeeper.

What happened to me reveals one secret about our human nature that is the more you understand about something good, the more you involve in it and the more you get excited about it. Before understanding, things look wearied and mostly unacceptable. After understanding more appreciation occurred along with acceptance.

When you enter the Orthodox Church for the first time, you watch many rituals. You start to wonder, why the priest does this and why the deacons perform that? All seems like an opera that performed in Latin and you have no clue about its contents. In the church, you will see special rituals for almost every event. Not only have the church dispensed rituals during the Divine Liturgy but also in other prayers. The reason behind using these rituals in the church is mainly because they're full of spiritual symbols. Symbolism is manifested in prayers and in some icons too.

**But, why does church use so many rituals and symbols?**

The answer is so simple. If human being is made of thoughts only, then the church needs to talk to human's brains only, as it happens in the majority of protestant churches when their worship contains just readings and giving sermons. However, human being is not made of absolute thoughts only, but made also of senses that can see, hear, smell, touch, and has soul and spirit that each has its own world. So, the church needs to address all the senses, the soul, and the spirit too in addition to the thoughts. In other words, the church needs a holistic approach that speak to the whole person, and not to just his brain. The world just recently started to pay attention to the holistic approach to humanity to benefit from it, while the Orthodox Church followed it from its early inception.

Actually God reveals this holistic approach in worship to man from the beginning of history. Reading the book of Leviticus, in the Old Testament, you will see special rituals for every event and for every purpose. Without getting into details, you will notice how these rituals speak to the brain, touch the senses and have its own impact on the soul and spirit.

Not only the rituals, but also the building of worship was full of meaningful symbols. For example, in the Temple of Solomon there were sanctuary, alters, ornamental buds and open flowers, and two cherubim made of olive wood, each had ten cubits (see details in 1 Kings, chapter 6).

So, the temple was full of symbols and the worship encompassed many rituals that also contained symbols too. Readers can conclude from reading about worship in the Old Testament that God reveals the holistic approach to touch man's thoughts, senses, hearts, souls, and spirit through effective using of symbols in every aspect of worship and in the building of worship, the house of the Lord.

### **But, Why Symbols?**

If symbols were revealed by God as the best approach so we need to follow their example diligently and this what we do until today in the Orthodox Church. The apostles left us prayers and rituals full of symbolism that were delivered to us through handing down from one generation to the next. However, for those who need understanding, I offer some simple explanation, hoping to help them see the reasons behind using symbols in worship.

To start with, let me say that symbols are the most convenient way to interact with the whole human being: body, soul, and spirit. Since worship is based not only in teaching but on interacting of the person with the Divine, then using symbols will help each of us in worshiping God. Worship that concentrates on talking to brains only falls short. When we compare teaching using lectures alone with teaching that is armed with audio-visuals aids, we find great evidences that teaching encompasses visual-aids gets higher results. The reason is that when you use audio-visuals, you give chance to the body's senses to participate in the learning process. Teachings using thoughts and words usually have a limited scope- one or two ideas-, address specific thoughts and speak directly to the brain. On the other hand, teachings that utilize audio-visuals aids speak not only to the brains but also find way to senses, pave ways to imaginations and react with perceptions, which all in all leave much better impact on the whole person, not only his mind.

Symbols when we understand them can speak not only to the mind or senses but to the deepest part in our souls and spirits. For example, let's examine the impact of the crucifixion you see in every Orthodox Church. I can talk to you about the cross, but what you get is my limited thoughts that I conveyed to you. To serve you better, I may show you a movie about crucifixion. Surely, you will be more touched. Probably you will cry when you witnessed the cruelty of the torture of the cross. Millions of people cried when they watched Gibson's movie, "The Passion." It left a great impact on them.

The reason behind that is the cleverness of Gibson in making the events so close to people and portraying them in touching and shocking details.

Leaving the crucifixion hanging in the church is a symbol that speaks to the depth of people. Someone sees in it forgiveness of sins and will cry because of his own sins, another sees in it the love of God to human being and gets touched by this eternal love, and other people each sees in it different meaning and is touched by different approaches. So, the cross as a symbol carries a big span of spiritual thoughts that could travel to the deepest parts of our souls and hearts. Gandhi of India stood before the crucifixion and cried. While we don't know why he cried, but this is a proof of how symbols could impact humans.

Therefore, the church with all these symbolic rituals and other symbols is full of keys to the souls and spirits of humans that help them to get her message to the deepest level of each person. Besides, believing that the grace of God can use the symbols to reach to the people will lead us to have more appreciation to the presence of symbols in the church.

Symbols are also powerful spiritual tools because they can touch people without regard to their intellectual level or social status; it touches children as well as senior people and all other ages in between. Not only that, but it also speaks to people at different circumstances, for example, looking at a cross, one person may cry because of his sorrow on his sins, while another may find himself full of joy because he sees in the cross his victory over sin. Even though, it is the same cross, people react differently to it based on personal circumstances.

Although, symbols speak to all, the more you understand them the more benefits you get. Symbols are ladders in the church that you can climb to reach to the highest level of spirituality. Just to demonstrate the spiritual impact of understanding the symbols, let me share with you this experience. When I was young and I didn't understand the meaning of symbols in the church, I never

got any spiritual benefits from watching the priest covering the bread and wine with a big veil at the end of the thanksgiving prayers. Later on, I understood that the veil is a symbol of the stone that covered the tomb of Christ, and what the priest does is a symbol of burial of Christ. Even the hymn sung at that time has a sad melody to represent the sad women going to visit the tomb of Christ. Now, whenever those moments in the Divine Liturgy come, they bring to me some spiritual thoughts. I find myself asking my Lord to bury my sins, and raise me in the victory of Your resurrection. While saying this, I always remember the sad women and I feel the sadness that my sins caused my Lord.

Now, you can clearly see the impact of understanding the meaning of the symbols used in the church. I recommend that you start reading books that interpret the rituals of the church. Not only read, but later on when you attend the Divine Liturgy remember those rituals and their meaning and contemplate on each for as long time as you can.

### **How About Understanding the Prayers of the Divine Liturgy?**

The more you understand the meaning of the prayers of the Divine Liturgy the more you can participate fully in the prayers and eventually the more blessings you get. Let me give you an example, if I put on dark glasses and walk into a store, I will hardly see things in the store, and even what I see won't be clear. Once I took off the dark glasses, I will enjoy seeing everything in its original beauty and in clear details. Same thing happens to us. Before understanding the Divine Liturgy we have dark glasses on our eyes that let's enjoy a little bit of the prayers, however, prevent us from seeing the full beauty of the prayers and hinder us from complete participation in the prayers.

Understanding prayers is the first step in which you comprehend the meaning of each prayer. The second step is to meditate on the meaning and make some personal attachments to the meaning. In other words, apply the meaning to my spiritual life in such a way that enriches my dialogue with God during the Divine Liturgy.

As we continue to understand the prayers we will continue to explore the depth of the prayers, and little by little our participation in the prayers will get deeper and deeper. Let me give you one example. There are a few prayers almost in the middle of the Divine Liturgy. Listening to these prayers first time, you find as if someone is trying to summarize the story of human being from the fall of Adam and Eve to the end of time. Generally speaking this is true; nevertheless, it has more than that, it tells the story of salvation. Now you have a better understanding. Then when I tell you that it talks about how my dear Lord has done for my personal salvation, it moves to a personal level that I can use in my dialogue with God during the Divine Liturgy. Going to the church and listening to this part of the prayers, I have a long conversation with my beloved God about His eternal love for me. He came from heaven to save me from my sins. He was born as human to make Himself touchable by me. I thank Him for sharing things with me. Then when the priest mentioned His suffering, I talk to Him about my sins that were a thorn on His holy head. For each paragraph of the prayer, I have many things to talk about to my beloved God and Lord.

Another example, just before the Holy Communion, the priest says:

“The hollies for the holy. Blessed be the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God; the sanctification is by the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

First we need to understand the meaning. The statement proclaims that what we’re about to take are the hollies, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then it continues to warn people saying that these hollies are only for those people who are holy.

A frightening message! But, understanding the rest of it will alleviate the fear. “The sanctification is by the Holy Sprit,” gives a comfort to the heart by declaring that the Holy Spirit will sanctify us to make us worthy of His mysteries.

Now I need to use this understanding as a prayer and a dialogue with my beloved Lord. To do so, I need to get it personalized. In other words, apply this understanding to my life. During the Divine Liturgy when I hear these prayers, I tell my Lord that I don't deserve to participate in these mysteries because I am not holy and I start to humbly confess my sins and then I thank Him for the Holy Spirit that He sent to sanctify me which I badly need.

In brief, get the general understanding of the prayers. Then apply them to your life and later use them as starting points in my personal prayers and dialogue with God in the Divine Liturgy.

HIS HOLINESS  
POPE SHENOUDA III  
POPE AND PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA  
THE 117<sup>TH</sup> SUCCESSOR OF ST. MARK THE APOSTLE



*"During celebrating the Divine Liturgy"*

# CONCLUSION

So far you have seen how while we're on earth the Divine Liturgy can take us beyond time and place to the timeless and eternal, to water our souls with the spring of life and let's live in our beloved home in heaven to taste the indescribable heavenly joy. Then, at the end of the glorified journey, we open our mouth to receive the source of eternal life, His body and blood, and along with Him come all sources of joy and fulfillment. We leave the church as victorious children of God who carry Christ inside their ribs and ready to face the world and devil.

Some of us once they have tasted what they tasted they will never go back to sinful life but will continue to explore more and more of the unimaginable heaven and enrich their lives with the immeasurable grace of God. They walk from glory to glory and became like stars that shine for others. Those will strongly refuse all devil's offers and abstain themselves from any sinful doing. They start looking for other sources that enrich their spiritual life on a daily basis, and in their search they will find the psalms prayers and the hidden grace in the word of God.

However, sadly to say others may gradually loose what they gained during the Divine Liturgy either by getting trapped by the devil or by being tempted by sin or simply by ignoring the daily prayers and Bible readings. Therefore, be watchful, lest after you have tasted heaven, you loose it. Rather, keep living with God on a daily basis, refusing all the devil's offers and all sin's temptations. Put in your heart that you're a new creature who lives only for Christ, Who is your best friend, and your daily source of joy. You have sufficiency in Him alone. You live according to His commandments no matter how costly that could be for you.

You tasted heaven, so do not accept anything else that may let you loose your eternal share in heaven. You're invited for full inheritance in heaven. Why do you accept anything that could steal this inheritance from you? You need to struggle, but the grace of God will help you.

However, if you were one of those children of God who tasted the beauty of Christ, but for one reason or another you have been dragged back into sinful life. There is a hope for you too. Go back to your beloved Father who is waiting for your return. Just consider yourself as another prodigal son. You know the story of the prodigal son-if you forget it read it again in Luke 15-and you know what the Father did for the prodigal son. You're that son. So, hurry up before it is too late. Get up now and offer your words and your heart to God again. The gate is open now, so hurry up, don't delay lest the gate could start to close. Inside the gate there is your father who is longing for your return.

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

“The Divine Liturgy is the greatest event that we could experience in our lives... The Divine Liturgy is a journey to the Heaven, the throne of God; it is living moments of Eternal Life while on earth “whenever we stand in Your Holy Sanctuary, we are considered standing in Heaven”

*(from the prayer of the third hour in the Agpyea)*

“In this book, the blessed deacon Victor Beshir is taking you in a journey to the heaven in which he explains to us how to prepare ourselves for this journey in a very simple and practical way.”

*H.G. Bishop Youssef, Bishop,  
Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern USA*

“In this booklet I am inviting you to the most joyful experience you will ever have in your life that richly surpasses any joy, happiness, excitements, and thrills you ever have.

This experience would be like finding yourself again and reaching peace with yourself, as you never experienced before.“

“The Lord Jesus Christ incarnated to return us, human beings, to our home, to the kingdom of Heaven. He established the Divine Liturgy during the Last Supper to leave it to us as a window to heaven and as a starting point for everyone who wishes to visit the heaven.”

VICTOR BESHIR

