



*A Mighty Arrows' question for His Grace Bishop Youssef:*

## **"What is Considered Appropriate Behavior for Youth during the Divine Liturgy?"**

**Question:** What is considered appropriate behavior during the Divine Liturgy and in the church generally for youth? It seems abouna has become particularly adamant lately about how the youth should behave inside the church during Divine Liturgy. Further, certain behaviors and especially quietness are expected of the adults including the mothers with small children. When so many people are all together isn't some noise and movement especially children about the inside of the church acceptable to give the mothers a break? Shouldn't everyone feel comfortable in the church?



*"Those who seek Me early will find Me." (Proverbs 8:17); 2) focus on the prayers of the Divine Liturgy... "I will pray with the spirit and I will also pray with the understanding, I will sing with the spirit and I will also sing with understanding." (I Corinthians 14:15); 3) confession at least every forty days... "For those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24); and 4) partake of the Holy Communion being spiritually prepared and not depriving yourself from the community of believers... "Drink from it all of you..." (Matthew 26:26-27).*

**Answer:** Let us be briefly reminded of what sacredness is occurring during the Divine Liturgy-- angels, archangels, the Cherubim and the Seraphim, together with all the heavenly hosts are present and surrounding the altar with the greatest of glory. When the priest calls upon the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine present on the altar into the holy Body and Blood of our Lord, He is present among the praising of His Holy angels. Certainly this requires the greatest level of respect, quietness, and worship that we as worshippers show. The way our respect is shown is by our behavior; complete devoutness, reverence, and the sincerest sense of worship. This can be accomplished in two ways.

First, we must prepare ourselves for the Divine Liturgy, be concerned with our personal worship foremost, and be an example to others; 1) arrive early...

Second, everyone is called upon to be prepared for worship that enters a place of worship. Everyone should arrive at least prior to the Holy Gospel reading. Those who are late (not present for the Holy Gospel reading) should not partake of the Holy Communion. Preparation also includes taking care of personal needs prior to leaving home, on entrance to the church building prior to entering the worship. An occasional person or the elderly may have special needs which require exiting the church worship which are unavoidable.

In most churches and I am assuming yours as well, there is a cry room for small children and their special needs during the Divine Liturgy. Children cannot be expected to remain still during the entire length of the Divine Liturgy and can be taken to the cry room along with their mothers. In the event of the church not hav-



ing a cry room, the child can be taken outdoors for a short break and brought back inside to remain quietly beside their parents.

Also most churches have a vestibule or entry hall with doors which can be closed between the worshippers and the hall, which is another option only if the church does not have a cry room. Toys, games, pencil/ paper and books have no place in the worship service of our Lord. Infant chairs with wheels and strollers that produce noise and movement back and forth should be in the cry room and/or vestibule for less distraction to others.

There should be no worldly conversation and laughter in the midst of the heavenly Divine Liturgy. If social conversation is occurring then perhaps a meeting place other than the church can be set aside for visiting with one another such as someone's home.

We should understand that if someone approaches the Holy Communion unworthily, he is condemned before God for his negligence and receiving Communion in an unworthily manner and he will be judged as ***"He who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks Judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body."*** (1 Corinthians 11:29)

Many of you have heard of the "measuring reed"... ***"Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there." (Revelations 11:1).*** The measuring reed gives the priests the right to measure the believers.

Priest may absolve the person who deserves absolution and bind the persons who deserve binding. If the priest should forbid anyone to take Holy Commu-

nion, it is not appropriate to complain and be upset. The member is called upon to listen to correction, be thankful for the care, and accept the instruction.

Finally, appropriate behavior was required in the Old Testament synagogues and tabernacles. They held assemblies of believers, were organized, conducted in an orderly fashion and were known as "places of prayer." Not places of child play, social discussion, a place to present yourself when you have over slept, or a place to wander up and down the church aisles without thinking of the distractions you may cause to another believer's worship.

We know that in the Holy Gospels, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is described as teaching in the synagogues of Galilee. We further know that in the Acts of the Apostles, St. Paul preaches in the synagogues about the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament we know that the Lord Jesus Christ over turned the tables of those outside the temple who were irreverently providing a service to the worshippers coming to the Temple. Certainly this could be considered a distraction. What would the Lord do if the distractions were INSIDE the church worship service?

Not only is the Lord present in our worship services but we know that He has ALWAYS been present, ***"I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple..."*** (John 18:20)

We are all called to adhere to the very basic principles of worship, ***"Let all things be done decently and in order."*** (1 Corinthians 14:40) ✱

»»» Written by A Mighty Arrow —>

