

Year 2: Using our Senses in Worship

January: Things We Touch (or that touch us) in Church

- Making the sign of the cross—how, when, and why
- Anointing and Holy Chrism
- The Priest's Stole Touches us
- Holy Water
- Theophany and the Blessing of Homes
- Using our Bodies to Worship God

Saints and Feasts This Month

- The Saints of North America:
St. John Maximovich of San Francisco and Shanghai
(also called "the Barefoot" and "The Wonderworker")

Memory Verse:

- *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."*

**Monthly packets are also available online at:
www.saintalexio.org/youthministry.html**

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The Sign of the Cross
By Rev. David Abramsov

The symbol of the Christian Faith has been and will always be the Cross, for it is the sign of our Redemption by Our Lord Jesus Christ Who came to earth to suffer for us by being crucified upon the Cross. When people wish to show that something is dedicated to Christ they mark it with a cross. All Christians wear their baptismal crosses because they are dedicated to Christ.

How to make the sign of the cross

First we join the first three fingers of our right hand together (the thumb, the index finger, and the middle finger), and we bend the other two fingers down to the palm. We then trace on ourselves the Cross by touching the three joined fingers of the right hand to the forehead, the breast (or abdomen), the right shoulder and the left shoulder. After forming the Cross on ourselves we slightly bow our heads to express to God our reverence and humility.

When we join our three fingers together it is as if we wanted to say: "I believe in God, One in the Trinity; in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; not in one person, but Three Persons; not in three gods, but One God." When we bend the other two fingers of our right hand down to the palm it is as if we were saying: "I believe that Our Savior Jesus Christ, Who is at the same time Real God and Real Man, the God-man, came down to earth for our salvation." We touch our forehead to ask God to sanctify our thoughts; our breast, to sanctify our senses; our shoulders, to strengthen our wills for the doing and keeping of God's commandments. When we make the Sign of the Cross we bear the inscription: "I belong to Jesus Christ"; and we show thereby that we want to live and act not for ourselves but for the Lord our God. As the Cross is being made we say the following prayer (unless we are saying another prayer at the time): "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." We say these words to make it clear that we want to belong to God and serve Him alone.

Excerpt from The Orthodox Companion by Rev. David F. Abramtsov published by Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, Englewood, New Jersey, 1994
<http://www.stlukeorthodox.com/html/parishinfo/signofthecross.cfm>

When to make the sign of the Cross
By Rev. David Abramsov

God is always near us because He is everywhere. He always sees us just as He sees everything. But during prayer we are especially close to God: we stand before Him, speak to Him and He listens to us. Because of this, while praying, we sign ourselves with the Cross more often, and especially before and after each prayer in order that we may not be distracted in saying them. We also make the Cross on ourselves when we enter church or approach any sacred object or kiss an icon, and many times during church services. We should make the Sign of the Cross in the morning in order to obtain the blessing of God for the day; in the evening to ask for his protection during the night; at all the important moments of our life: when in danger, in sorrow, in joy; before all important undertakings that they may turn out well; at mealtime to invoke God's blessing and to give Him thanks.

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MY ORTHODOX NOTEBOOK

ANSWERS TO PRACTICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ORTHODOX WAY OF LIFE

No. 1 - On Wearing the Cross

The Cross of Jesus Christ is the joy and boast of Christians. By the Cross we were saved and by the Cross the demons are put to flight.

Wearing the Cross on our person is a fundamental and simple way to keep Christ in our daily life and to fight the influence of the devil.

Who wears the Cross and when?

At holy Baptism, every Orthodox Christian receives an image of the Precious Cross to be worn around the neck. From the moment of Baptism until the moment of death, every Orthodox Christian should wear the Cross at every moment.

The cross is not merely jewelry or decoration for our person, but the sign of the triumph of Christ over death and our belonging to Christ. It is not Orthodox simply to "decorate" ourselves or our children with the cross on Sundays to come to Church and then leave the cross off the rest of the week. **A Christian wears the Cross at all times.**

Do we wear the cross on the inside or the outside?

Except for the clergy, we normally wear the cross on the inside of our shirt or blouse, not the outside. It is not outward adornment but rather a reminder of our baptism, an act of prayer, and a protection against the devil. It is not bad to wear the cross on the outside, if we desire, but this is not actually the ancient custom.

What about Small Icon Medallions and Phylakta*?

It is Christian and praiseworthy to bear these on ourselves, for they are holy and grace-giving. But wearing the Cross is "square one" - more basic and necessary.

*(Phylakta are small squares of fabric enclosing ribbons or cloth touched to the True Cross or the relics of the saints. Wearing them is a holy custom from the earliest times of the Church.)

What about Wearing an Eye?

Wearing the image of an eye is not a Christian practice but rather a practice of magicians. It is powerless and will not protect us from the activity of evil spirits. Perhaps older relatives or friends taught us this custom because they did not understand its origins, but we should not pass on such a practice to our children.

Practical Tip

After Baptism, put away your child's "official" baptismal cross, which normally is very beautiful and costly, until he is old enough to take care of it properly. Then obtain small, inexpensive images of the cross - metal, wood, or cloth - and pin one to the baby's clothing. As children grow older, they can wear an inexpensive cross on a simple chain or string. Of course, they will lose them, but this should not stop us from striving for our children always to wear the image of the Cross. Check them every day to see that they have their cross!

What is Available Here at St. Spyridon?

We have simple crosses for wearing about the neck, available in the Church bookstore. More expensive crosses can be ordered through the bookstore.

We also have phylakta as a blessing from our bishop, to be given to Christians upon request.

The Sanctification of the Holy Chrism

Pavlos Menesoglou

INTRODUCTION

Patriarch Bartholomew announced that this year, 2002, the Holy Chrism will once again be consecrated on Holy Thursday in the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.† The Holy Chrism is consecrated by the Ecumenical Patriarch for use in holy churches for the celebration of the sacrament of Holy Chrismation.† The sacrament of Holy Chrismation is the visible sign of the transmission of gifts of the Holy Spirit upon those entering Orthodoxy.† The Holy Chrism is thus a bond that unites all true Orthodox Christians throughout the world.

The Orthodox public is unfortunately not generally informed about the significance, history, and preparation of the Holy Chrism. Accordingly, I thought it would be useful to translate into English the present informative pamphlet regarding the Holy Chrism for the benefit of the Orthodox people. For reference, the pamphlet, by Pavlos Menesoglou, (Athens: Apostolike Diakonia, 1992), pp. 13-19, summarizes material from his book, *The Holy Chrism in the Eastern Orthodox Church* (in Greek), (Thessalonike: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1972), p. 271.† This book also has a very good bibliography.

Father George C. Papademetriou

THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE HOLY CHRISM

In the Orthodox Church, the Holy Chrism is sanctified for use in the celebration of the sacrament of Chrismation.† It is a visible sign of the transmission of gifts of the Holy Spirit to those who are baptized.

During the early years of Christianity, the transmission of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the baptized were given by the Apostles through the "laying of hands." It is stated in the Scriptures that, "Now when the Apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands upon them and they received the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:14-17, R.S.V.)

When the Church spread throughout the world and the number of the baptized was greatly increased, it was not possible to continue the practice of Samaria. Consequently, the Apostles introduced the use of the sanctified Chrism.† The Holy Chrism was sanctified by the Apostles and was continued thereafter by the bishops through the Apostolic Succession. The "laying on of hands" was completely replaced by the Holy Chrism to transmit gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The use of the Holy Chrism was introduced to the Christian Church from the existing Old Testament practice. It is stated that, "The Lord said to Moses, 'Take the finest spices -- 12 pounds of liquid myrrh, 6 pounds of sweet-smelling cinnamon, 6 pounds of sweet cane, and 12 pounds of cassia (all weighted according to official standard). Add one gallon of olive oil, and make a sacred anointing oil, mixed like perfume.'" (Exodus 30:22-25)

Over the years of its existence, the Holy Chrism has been known by many names, such as "oil," "oil of Thanksgiving," "oil of anointing," "Chrism," "Chrism of thanksgiving," "Chrism from heavens," "mystical Chrism," "myrrh," "divine myrrh," "mystical myrrh," "great myrrh," and "holy and great myrrh."† Today, the terms generally used are "Holy Myrrh" or "Holy Chrism."

The Holy Chrism is prepared from oil and another fragrant essences, which symbolize the variety of gifts of the Holy Spirit that the chrismated Christian receives. The most ancient list of materials and the aforementioned information "concerning the materials of the myrrh," which are still used today, date from the eighth century C.E.†† This list includes the materials used for the preparation and making of the Holy Chrism. At the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, there is an official "List of kinds of fragrances, from which the Holy Chrism is made," which includes 57 kinds of elements.

Information on how Holy Chrism was sanctified during the first centuries of Christianity is not available. The oldest reference is in The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytos. Later, directions concerning the sanctification of the Holy Chrism were included in the Great Prayer Book (Mega Euchologion) and Goar's Euchologion. Constantinople presently uses this course in the preparation of the Holy Chrism.† During the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the present [twentieth] century, the Ecumenical Patriarchate made a special effort to revise carefully the prayer book containing the order and service of sanctification of the Holy Chrism.† The new revised edition was published for official use at the Ecumenical Throne.† Such services were published in 1890, 1912, and 1960.

In accordance with the rubrics followed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the sanctification of the Holy Chrism takes place in the following order:

After the doxology on Palm Sunday, the Patriarch blesses the Archon of the Myrrh who, along with the other Archons, work with him to make the Holy Chrism. They wear a white tunic reaching to the ground. After blessing the Archon of the Myrrh, the Patriarch then places a towel on him.

The next day, on Holy and Great Monday, after the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, the Patriarch enters the Patriarchal Church of the Great Myrrh, Saint George, where an appropriately decorated sepulchred and the boilers for the Holy Chrism are located. The Patriarch then blesses the beginning of the cycle of the sanctification of the Holy Chrism with a special holy service. Following the blessing, he sprinkles holy water on the prepared materials, the utensils to be used, and the copper boilers. Then, holding a lighted candle, he touches each boiler, placing pieces of old charred holy icons in them. Then the Patriarch reads chapters from the Holy Gospel. The readings of the lessons (pericopes) from the New Testament are then continued by those present, including hierarchs, clergy from the Patriarchate, as well as visiting clergy. This order of readings continues all day on Holy

Monday, Holy Tuesday, and Holy Wednesday.

On Holy and Great Tuesday, after the Divine Liturgy, a small supplication canon to the Theotokos is sung at the holy sepulcher. Prayers are offered for those who contributed material, money, and effort to prepare the Holy Chrism.

On Holy and Great Wednesday, after the Divine Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified gifts, the Patriarch once again comes to the holy sepulcher and, after a brief service, places in the boilers rose oil, musk, and other sweet-smelling oil. On this day, all preparations for making the Holy Chrism are completed.

On Holy and Great Thursday, after Matins (Orthros) at the Patriarchal chapel of Saint Andrew and after the complete vesting of the Patriarch and the other hierarchs, the procession from the Patriarchal Palace to the Patriarchal Church begins. The bells ring during the entire procession. During the procession, the Patriarch holds the small myrrh container.† The first in order of the hierarchs holds an alabaster containing pre-sanctified Chrism.† The second in order of the hierarchs holds an alabaster containing unsanctified Chrism.† The other hierarchs hold small silver vases containing Chrism from the prepared materials to be sanctified. Twenty-four archimandrites hold (one on each side) 12 silver containers filled with the Chrism to be sanctified.† During the Divine Liturgy, at the appointed time after the exclamation: "And may the mercy of our Great Lord," the Grand Archimandrite exclaims, "Let us attend."† The congregation kneels, and the Patriarch sanctifies the Holy Chrism according to the rubrics. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the sanctified Holy Chrism is transferred from the church to the Patriarchal myrrh center in reverse order according to the order of the Procession. It is in the Patriarchal myrrh center that the alabasters and the containers that contain the Holy Chrism are deposited. Following this transfer, the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy takes place.

During the early centuries of Christianity, a firm tradition existed in the Church in which the Holy Chrism was sanctified only by the bishops of the Church and not by the presbyters (priests). At that time, there were no distinctions among bishops, that is among bishops of dioceses and metropolitanate bishops of greater church districts. As the years passed, however, the common right of all bishops was eventually transferred to the bishops of churches with greater status, that is, to the Patriarchs, and finally to the Ecumenical Patriarch, who today is able to transmit this right to the heads of local Orthodox churches. In other words, even though each bishop has the right to sanctify the Holy Chrism by his status as bishop, he is not permitted by canon law to do so. It appears that there are three reasons that restrict the right of sanctifying the Holy Chrism to the Ecumenical Patriarch. These reasons include: a) the scarcity of the materials and the difficulty for each bishop to prepare the Holy Chrism, b) the constant increase of dependence of the diocese on the head of the greater church and district, and c) the special position that the Ecumenical Patriarchate received through the centuries in relation to the other patriarchates of the East and that expresses the spiritual bond between the Church of Constantinople and the local churches of the people who received the Christian faith from its missionaries.

In reality, this exclusive right to sanctify the Holy Chrism of the Ecumenical Patriarchate does not mean that local churches are dependent and subordinate to Constantinople. This act of receiving the Holy

Chrism from the Ecumenical Patriarchate is a tangible and visible sign of the amity and bond of local churches, patriarchates, and autocephalous churches with the Ecumenical Patriarchate.† It is a necessary sign, not a sign of superiority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Orthodox Church, but an existing visible sign of unity among the cluster of local Orthodox churches. Nevertheless, in the Orthodox Church, the Holy Chrism, in addition to being sanctified in the Ecumenical Patriarchate, is sanctified in the contemporary patriarchates of Moscow, Belgrade, and Bucharest.

As was stated earlier, Holy Chrism is used mainly in the celebration of the sacrament of Chrismation, which takes place immediately following the sacrament of Baptism. It is, however, a separate, distinct sacrament from Baptism. According to Orthodox Church readings, through the administration of the sacrament of Chrismation, the baptized receive gifts (charismata) that are transmitted to them by the Holy Spirit.† Such gifts also help the baptized live a life in Christ, which they enter through baptism, and equip them in their struggle against sin and the attacks of evil.† Through the seal of Chrismation, the baptized attain "mature manhood, to the measure of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13 R.S.V.)

The Holy Chrism is also used to chrismate the heterodox (non-Orthodox) joining the Church, and to chrismate those fallen away from the Orthodox Faith and who are returning to the Orthodox Church.† In addition, it is also used to consecrate holy churches, altar tables, objects, and utensils, and for other sacred ceremonial circumstances. In past centuries, it was also used to anoint the Orthodox kings during their crowning.

The following is a list of dates and Patriarchs during the twentieth century when the Holy Chrism was sanctified in the Ecumenical Patriarchate:

1903, Patriarch Joachim III

1912, Patriarch Joachim III

1928, Patriarch Basileios III

1939, Patriarch Benjamin I

1951, Patriarch Athenagoras I

1960, Patriarch Athenagoras I

1973, Patriarch Demetrios 1

1983, Patriarch Demetrios 1

1992, Patriarch Bartholomew

From: <http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith8420>

What Is Holy Chrismation?

Word Magazine February 1962 Page 5

WHAT IS HOLY CHRISMATION?

Father Michael J. Buben

“Holy Chrismation is a Sacrament in which the baptized believer, being anointed with Holy Chrism on certain parts of the body, in the name of the Holy Spirit, receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit for growth and strength in spiritual life.” (Philaret’s Catechism)

This sacrament is administered immediately after baptism and like baptism cannot be administered twice to the same soul. Baptism cleans us from the pollution of original sin and makes us a member of the grace-giving living Orthodox Church of Christ. Chrismation nourishes and strengthens the baptised in the spiritual life. Just as a child needs the guidance of its parents, so a newly baptised soul receives the grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is one of the reasons why Chrismation has never been performed separately in the Orthodox Church.

Our Lord and Savior instituted this Sacrament when at the Jerusalem Temple He said: “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth in me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters etc., etc.” (John 7, 37-38). St. John explains this text as forecasting the Holy Spirit which believers would receive.

After the Apostles were strengthened with the “power from above”, they transferred gifts of this power to all who were baptized and “put on Christ.” As an example let us read the following texts from the book of Acts. “Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. (For as yet He was

fallen upon none of them: only they were baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.” (8, 14-17)

When the Apostles could not be at all places to “lay hands” on the growing number of Christians as thousands began to accept Christianity, they instituted the use of Holy Chrism. Holy Chrism could easily be distributed to the bishops and priests in the settlements where they served. Only bishops received the power to make Chrism as it was needed, and priests used it only in the absence of the bishop, but always in the bishop’s name as centuries passed. “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” (I John 2, 20). St. John in his first epistle further explains the inward grace which anointing with Chrism brings; and the anointing which you have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie: and event it hath taught you, abide therein.” (27)

St. Paul also wrote about Holy Chrismation when he said: “Now He which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God: Who hath also *sealed* us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” (2 Cor.1,21-22).

St. Paul in this text says anointing with Holy Chrism *establishes* us in Christ, and it is from here that the Church takes its formula for this Sacrament: *The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit*.

The anointing of the *forehead* signifies the sanctification of the mind, or thoughts. The anointing of the *chest* signifies the sanctification of the heart, or desires. The anointing of the *eyes, ears, lips* signifies the sanctification of the senses. The anointing of the *hands and feet* signifies their sanctification to good works and the walk in the way of His commandments.

Orthodox brothers and sisters Through the Sacrament of Holy Chrismation you were Confirmed in the Orthodox Faith. You received the Holy Spirit and grace-giving gifts, without which it would have been impossible for you to have spiritual growth.

Does the Sacrament glow in your heart or has it dimmed like the last ember in the fireplace? “Stir up the Gift of God!” Do not dim the gifts of the Holy Spirit nor contradict their influence by vain thoughts and desires. Help thy neighbor. Make use of prayer and fasting. Follow His commandments.

Specific parts of your body were sealed with Chrism, that all your strength and abilities might be given to the service of God. “For ye were bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Cor. 6, 20)

The Priest's Stole Touches Us

The priest's epitrachelion (stole) consists of a long strip of cloth, hung around the neck with the two strips fastened together in front, either by buttons or by stitching. The epitrachelion comes down in front almost to the hem of his robes, and is symbolic of the priest's "anointing" (Septuagint: Psalm 132:2; KJV: Psalm 133:2). Traditionally—though not necessarily—the epitrachelion will have seven crosses on it: six in the front (three on each side) and one on the back of the collar. The priest traditionally blesses the cross on the collar and kisses it before he puts it on, and kisses it again when he takes it off. When he is vesting for the Divine Liturgy, he says the following prayer before putting on the epitrachelion:

Blessed is God, Who poureth out His grace upon His priests, like the oil of myrrh upon the head, which runneth down upon the beard, upon the beard of Aaron: which runneth down to the fringe of his raiment. (Cf. Psalm 132:2, LXX)

In the Russian Orthodox tradition, the priest may say a special blessing and sprinkle the epitrachelion with holy water before it is worn for the first time. A priest is not permitted to celebrate even the simplest service, even the Daily Office, unless he is wearing the epitrachelion (and in some traditions the epimanikia, or "cuffs", as well). When a member of the faithful goes to Confession, the priest places the edge of his epitrachelion over the head of the penitent as he confesses his sins. After the absolution, the penitent will often kiss the priest's hand and then one of the crosses on the edge of the epitrachelion. At an Orthodox wedding, the priest will have the bridal couple hold the edge of his epitrachelion as he leads them in a procession three times around the Gospel Book, symbolizing the pilgrimage of life.



From: [Wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epitrachelion)

www.saint-spyridon.com

ANSWERS TO PRACTICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ORTHODOX WAY OF LIFE

No. 21 - Holy Water

Why does the Church bless water?

Water is the fundamental element of life. All living things need water to live.

- In the beginning, God brought life from the water that covered the earth.
- Each of us had his beginning in the water of his mother's womb.
- A human being's body consists to a great extent of water. Every human being, animal, and plant on earth needs water to survive.

Water is the beginning of spiritual life, as well.

- In Genesis we read how God saved Noah and his family from the evil surrounding them by sending the Flood through which He destroyed the old world and from which He brought forth life once again.
- In Exodus we read how God saved the Chosen People by leading them through the Red Sea and drowning the Egyptians who pursued them.
- In the Gospel we read that St. John the Forerunner prepared the people for the coming of Christ by baptizing them in water.
- Jesus Christ Himself was baptized by immersion in the water of the Jordan River.
- Jesus likewise commanded that everyone who believed in the Apostles' preaching be baptized. To this day we begin our life in the Church through water baptism.

Since the Church sanctifies every aspect of our life, it is only natural that through prayer she should sanctify water for us to be baptized in, as well as water to drink and to be blessed with.

When does the Church bless water?

There are three kinds of blessing of water: the blessing of water for the Mystery of Baptism, the Great Sanctification (Megas Agiasmos) which is performed at the Feast of the Theophany, and the Lesser Sanctification (Mikros Agiasmos) which is performed throughout the year in the Church, in homes, businesses, fields, and gardens, to sanctify the daily activities of our lives.

Holy Baptism is a whole subject unto itself. In this short article, we wish to talk about the Great and Lesser Agiasmos, and how we incorporate holy water into our daily lives.

What is the Great Agiasmos and how do we receive it?

The Great Agiasmos is the service of blessing water on the Feast of Christ's Baptism (Theophany) on 6 January Old Style (January 19th). We perform this service twice, once on the eve of the Feast and once on the Feast itself. We take the water blessed on January 5th to sanctify the homes of the faithful through sprinkling, and we drink the water blessed on January 6th after keeping a strict fast on January 5th. The Great Agiasmos is reserved in the Church, not normally in people's homes, and it should always be taken fasting. The Holy Canons prescribe that the Great Agiasmos water be given in lieu of Holy Communion, after fasting and confession, to those who are under a canonical epitimion (penance, "kanona") and therefore deprived of Holy Communion for a period of time; therefore obviously it is regarded as something very holy and possessed of spiritual power for the healing of soul and body.

What is the role of the Lesser Agiasmos?

The lesser Agiasmos can be performed and its sanctified water drunk throughout the year. This service may be performed in Church, at home, or at places of work, schools, government

offices, farms, fishing boats... everywhere that the activities of life go on! The purpose of the ongoing celebration of the Lesser Water Blessing throughout the year is to **sanctify ourselves and our daily activities for the sake of our spiritual and bodily health and salvation**. There are various forms of the Lesser Agiasmos: the standard form which we do once a month in Church and perform often in homes and businesses, and the special forms for the beginning of the school year, the beginning of every good work, the beginning of a governmental or parish council term, etc.

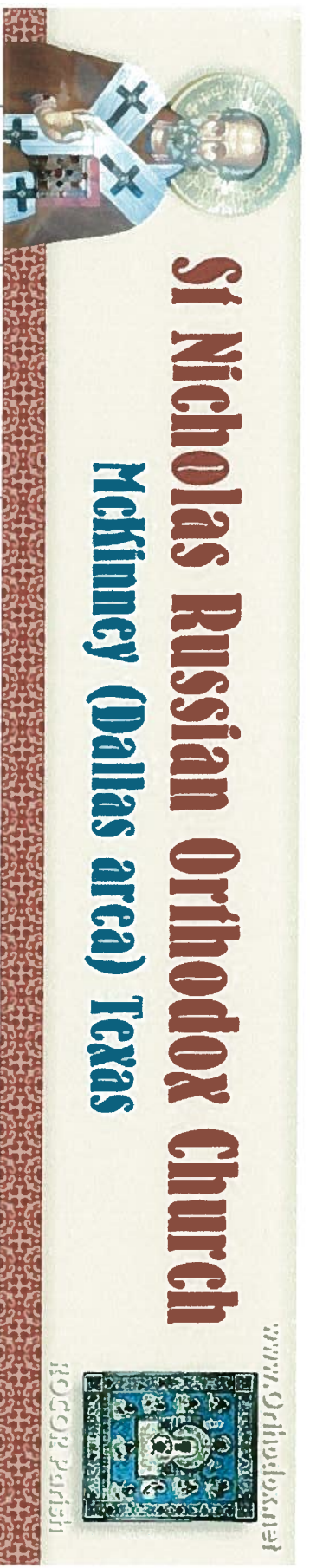
When should we invite the priest to perform the Lesser Agiasmos?

- On a regular basis, to our homes and businesses throughout the year, preferably once a month.
- When we are beginning something new, like starting a new business or moving into a new home.
- When there are troubles in the home: fighting, sickness, unfortunate events, etc.

What do we do with the blessed water of the Lesser Agiasmos?

- On the day we receive it in Church, we drink it after taking antidoron, and then we take it home and sprinkle our homes, cars, etc.
- Or, of course, the priest will sprinkle our home if he does the service in our house.
- Then we keep the Agiasmos in a clean, covered container with our icons and other holy things, and we take some every day before breakfast, after taking antidoron.

Let us begin these holy practices today, for the health and true spiritual happiness of our family members, and for greater peace, order, and holiness in our homes!



Theophany House blessings : 10 Things ^[1]

1. Houses are traditionally blessed with "Theophany water" each year. A house can be blessed at any time, but the usual season for yearly blessings is from Theophany until the beginning of the Lenten Triodion, which begins four Sundays before Great Lent begins. This is not a hard and fast rule, but a good rule of thumb.
2. Some people place great importance on "*Theophany water*". This is just water that has been blessed with the Great Blessing of the Waters service on Theophany. Another name for this water is simply "Holy Water". We can bless water any time of the year that there is a need for it. In Moscow, for example, there is a huge vat of holy water that the faithful partake of regularly. On regular basis, the vat is refilled with water when it becomes empty, and this new water is blessed. The water blessed in for instance, August is no more and no less "holy" than the water blessed on Theophany.
3. Water is blessed using the "Great Blessing of the Waters" service two distinct times during Theophany: after Vespers on the Eve of Theophany and after the Divine Liturgy on Theophany. The blessings are identical, and the water is identical.
4. In many places, it is traditional to bless water in lakes or rivers. In Russia, clergy often go to such a place, and bless the cold water after a hole has been cut in the ice. Many people will take a dip in the water after it is blessed.
5. When a home is blessed, the priest brings everything needed for the blessing:
 - Holy water
 - A "krupilla" (brush for flinging the holy water),
 - Bowl for the water

- Candles
- Theophany icon.

Many pious homes supply a bowl, candles and the family Theophany icon.

The family should provide the priest with a list of all family members, living and deceased.

The bowl and icon should be placed on a clean table with a cloth on it, preferably near the family icon corner. It is good for candles to be lit. The house should be clean, with all radios and televisions off.

The priest will bless all rooms of the house except the bathrooms. In homes with children, it is always good for the little ones to carry a candle or a small cross and "lead" the priest throughout the house. An elder member of the house may also do this.

6. The basic order for a simple home blessing is as follows.

- a. The bowl of water, icon and lit candles are placed on a clean table. IF there is a censer, it may be lit.
- b. The priest begins the service with a blessing and the Trisagion prayers (O heavenly King through the "Our Father") It is always preferable that the eldest of another member of the family say the Trisagion prayers.
- c. After this the entire home is blessed, with the family walking with the priest holding candles and the Theophany icon while the Theophany Troparion is sung over and over:

Tone 1: When Thou, wast baptized in the Jordan, O Lord,/ the worship of the Trinity was made manifest; /
for the voice of the Father bare witness to Thee, /
calling Thee His beloved Son. /
And the Spirit in the form of a dove /
confirmed the certainty of the word. /
O Christ our God, Who hast appeared //
and hast enlightened the world, glory be to Thee.

It is a very good idea for the family to sing this troparion, and know it by heart. Otherwise, of the priest has many houses to bless, his voice will get tired!

- d. Upon finishing blessing the house, the family gathers again at the table, and a short litany is said for the welfare of the family. The priest should have been provided a list of all family members, including those who are ill.
- e. After this a short prayer, and the service is ended.
- f. It is entirely appropriate the deceased loved ones of the family be commemorated from a list provided to the priest.
- g. Sometimes the family wants to give the priest a little something to eat; depending on the time the priest has, he may stay and visit.
7. When a priest visits, it is NEVER required that the family gives him money. The scripture tells us "Freely you have received, freely give".

It is a pious custom among some to give the priest a donation at this time, but this should never be thought of as a requirement. The priest comes to the home because he wants God's blessing to be upon it, and to know those in his flock better and to be available to them.

From St Nicholas Orthodox Church, McKinney Texas – www.orthodox.net

This document is at <http://www.orthodox.net/theophany-house-blessings.html> & <http://www.orthodox.net/theophany-house-blessings.doc>

New "10 things" entries, sermons, journal entries, scripture commentary & more are posted on our BLOG: <http://www.orthodox.net/redeemthetime>

Archive of "10 things": <http://www.orthodox.net/10things>



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^[1] This document is a list of ten (more or less) things about a particular topic. More "Ten Things" topics may be found at <http://www.orthodox.net/10things>. They are also

The Beatitudes.



The Fifth Beatitude

 Blessed are the Merciful,
for they shall obtain Mercy. 

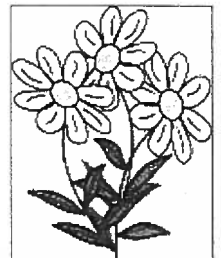
What is Merciful?

MERCY is love towards those that are miserable, those that are wretched, and those that need some type of help or assistance.

The merciful are people that have a tender heart and who truly feel in the deep parts of their heart the pain and the suffering of other people who need mercy. The merciful are those that go out of their way and make the effort to help others.

The first part of having mercy is to have compassion on those that are hurting.

The second part of having mercy is doing something about it.



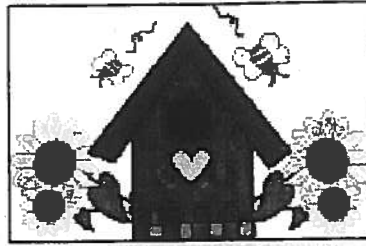
Jesus tells us to show the same type of mercy to others that He shows to each of us. In 2 Corinthians 1: 3-4 the Bible says "What a wonderful God we have - He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of every mercy, and the one who so wonderfully comforts and strengthens us in our hardships and trials. And why does He do this? So that when others are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them this same help and comfort God has given us."



We are not to perform occasional acts of charity, but we are to have the heart of Jesus and always show compassion and mercy in a thankful and cheerful way. God shows us mercy not just when we are good but when we are miserable, helpless, wicked, ungodly, and powerless. God shows us mercy when we are not deserving of His love, when we are foolish and when we are miserable due to our sin. God is happy to show us His mercy even when we do not deserve it. Just as God shows us Mercy we are commanded to show mercy to others.

This beatitude is also about showing mercy through the act of forgiving others daily. When someone does something wrong to you or someone you love, you are commanded to forgive them. Regardless of the reasons and regardless of the circumstances. Our Lord demands that we forgive one another just as God is constantly forgiving you.





"Your heavenly Father will forgive you if you forgive those who sin against you; but if you refuse to forgive them, He will not forgive you."

Matthew 6: 14-15

We need the mercy of God each and every day. When we realize that we sin daily, and we need God's forgiveness and mercy daily, then in our hearts we should realize God wants us to be like Him. If God is willing to give us His mercy every day then we should also be happy to extend mercy and forgiveness to others every day.

NOTES:

1 - wretched ~ a very unhappy person that is looked down upon by others.

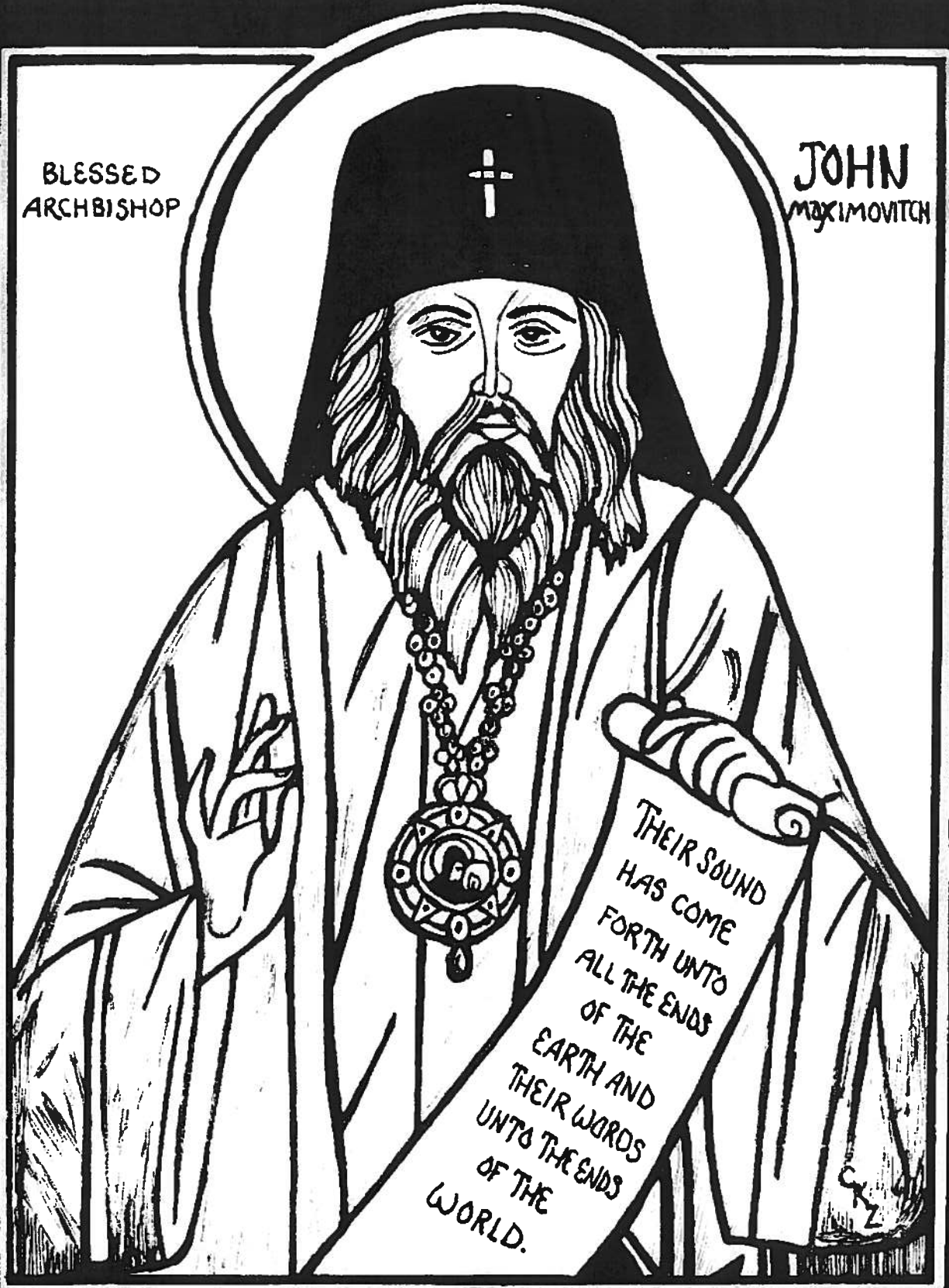
2 - Bible Passage from The People's Study Bible ~ Zondervan Bible Publishers

3 - Bible Passage from The People's Study Bible ~ Zondervan Bible Publishers



BLESSED
ARCHBISHOP

JOHN
MAXIMOVITCH



THEIR SOUND
HAS COME
FORTH UNTO
ALL THE ENDS
OF THE
EARTH AND
THEIR WORDS
UNTO THE ENDS
OF THE
WORLD.

St. John Maximovitch

St. John of San Francisco & Shanghai

Commemoration Date: July 2nd

On June 4, 1896, Michael Maximovitch was born in the village of Adamovka in southern Russia. He had two brothers and a sister. As a young child, he was very sick and hated to eat. He believed Archangel Michael was his heavenly protector and he prayed to him for help. At the age of eleven, Michael entered the Poltava Military Academy. Eleven years later he graduated from Kharkov Imperial University with a Law Degree.

In 1921, during a war in Russia, Michael's family had to move to Belgrade, Serbia. In order to pay for his education at Belgrade University, Michael sold newspapers. He graduated from the university with a degree in theology in 1925. One year later, he was tonsured a monk and given the name John. During the same year, he was ordained to the priesthood. On May 8, 1934 he was consecrated a Bishop and was assigned to the Diocese of Shanghai.

Because of his love for children, he opened an orphanage to help the sick and suffering children from the streets of Shanghai that were poor or didn't have a family. He served over 1,500 children while he was in charge of the orphanage. He always prayed to St. Tikhon of Zadonsk to protect the children. Shortly after he opened the orphanage, the land surrounding it was attacked. St. John decided to bring the children to America.

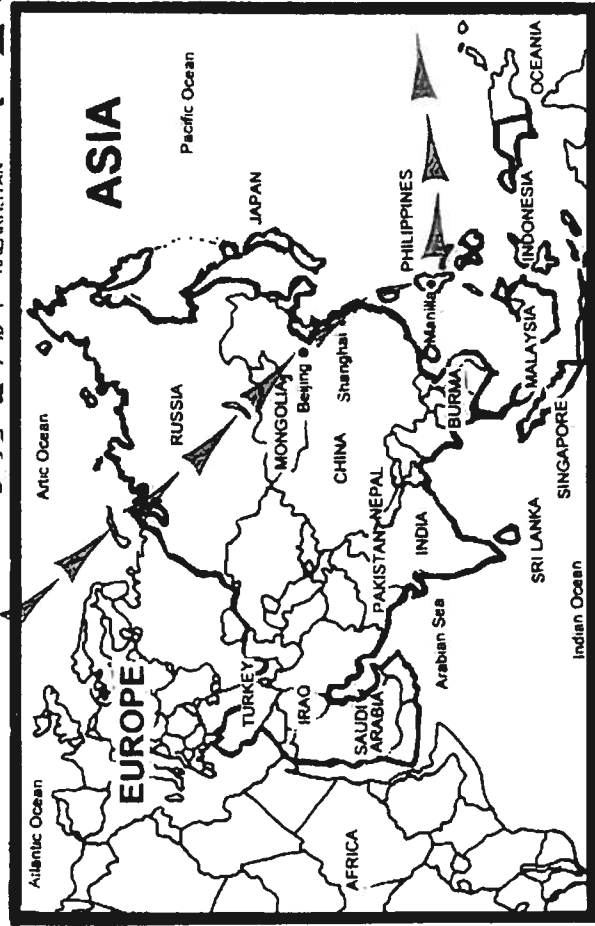
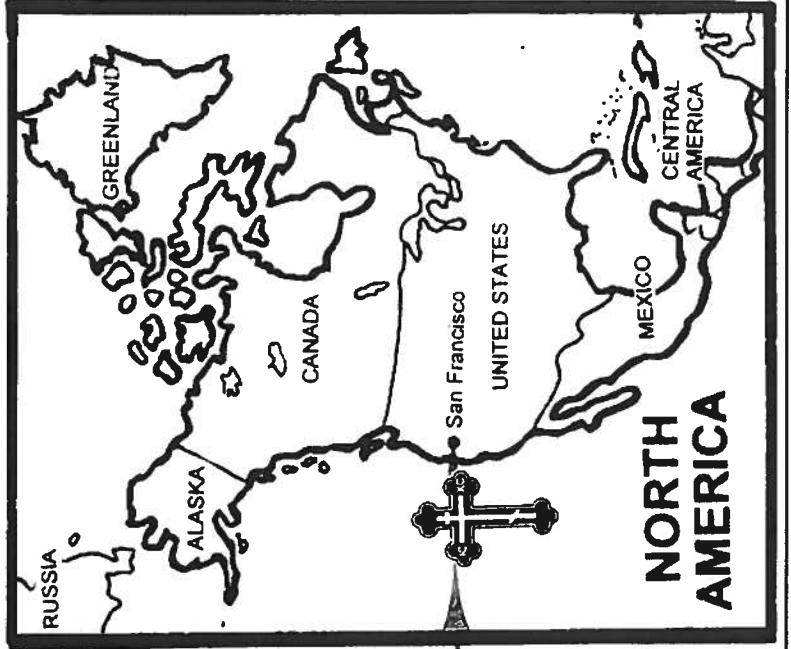
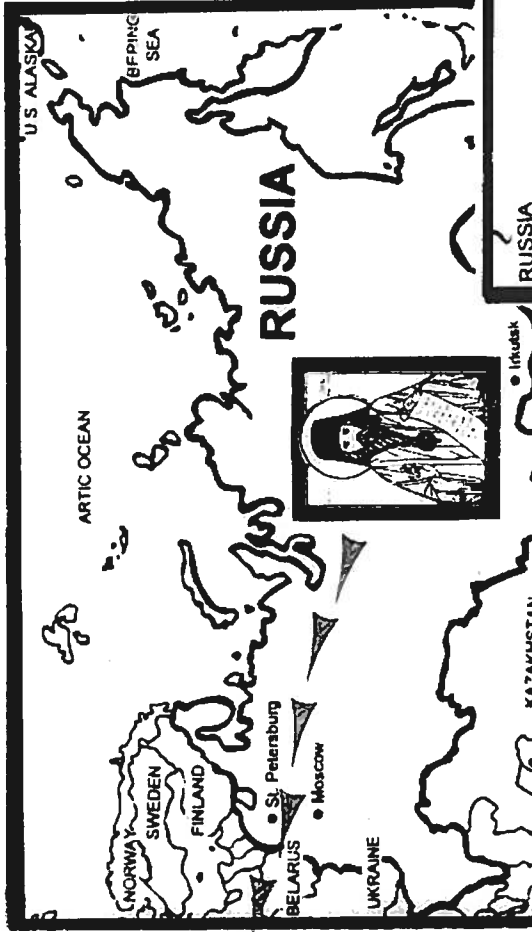
St. John became a teacher at the seminary and many nights he would stay up very late and cover the seminarians with their blankets that had fallen to the floor. He would then make the sign of the cross over each seminarian.

St. John was known for his special deeds. In 1949, 5000 Russians were forced to leave China. They went to an island in the Philippines that was often struck by typhoons. While St. John was on the island, the typhoon would often move in another direction and miss the homes of the people there. As soon as the people moved to the United States and Australia, the island was destroyed by a typhoon.

On November 21, 1962, the Feastday of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple, St. John was sent to the Cathedral in San Francisco, California. Under his direction, the building of the cathedral was finished.

Fr. John died on July 2, 1966 a few hours after serving the Divine Liturgy. Twenty-eight years after his death, he was canonized and became known as St. John of San Francisco and Shanghai.

St. John Maximovitch's Travels



What Comes Next?

St. John Maximovitch

Below you will see a bunch of jumbled letters, but don't let that scare you. To solve, write down the letter of the alphabet that comes right after the one that is shown. *Hint:* the letter A will replace the letter Z. Once you have completed this task, you will see the names of some famous monasteries and what is included for daily living. The first letter will be given to help get you started. Good Luck!

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1.) L N M Z R S D Q X

M _____

2.) B N M U D M S

3.) S Q Z O D Y Z

4.) Q D E Q D B S N Q X

5.) R J D S D

6.) B G T Q B G

7.) B D K K R

8.) L N T M S Z S G N R

9.) R Z H M S S H J G N M

10.) M D V R J D S D

11.) G N K X S Q Z M R E H F T Q Z S H N M

Using Our Bodies to Worship God

Bowing: We bow and make the Sign of the Cross when we say the Trisagion Prayer ("Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal...")

Prostrations: We make prostrations by touching our forehead to the floor. We do this a lot during Great Lent when we say the Prayer of St. Ephraim ("O Lord and Master of my life...") and when Father brings the Holy Sacrament in procession during the Presanctified Liturgy.

Kissing Icons: We kiss the hands of the saints and the feet of Jesus and the Theotokos.

Crossing our arms: We cross our arms over our heart (right over left) when we go to receive Holy Communion.

Metania: We make a deep bow and touch the floor when we venerate icons

Venerating the cross at the end of Liturgy: When we are invited, we go to kiss the cross, then we kiss Father's hand.

Asking for Father's blessing: Put your right palm over your left palm, bow your head and say "Father, Bless."

Because we are in God's House when we come to church, we are always respectful and quiet. We don't run around or make loud noise. When we go to receive Communion we stand quietly facing the altar. We do not wiggle around, push or shove or talk to others in line.