

Saturday September 29, 2007  
St. John the Baptist, Ottawa  
"Knowing what to do."

Story about Frank Shaeffler  
Because the Incarnation  
of the Son of God is so central  
to Christianity, there are numerous  
concrete expressions of our  
beliefs. As the holy mysteries  
convey the unseen aspects of  
the mystery of salvation through  
matter, so too do various  
concrete customs and traditions  
express our inner faith and  
beliefs.

I will treat of the temple and  
our traditions there and then  
give some consideration to  
what we do outside the temple.

#### Entering the Temple

God is everywhere, but the temple  
building is particularly sacred

because there the holy mysteries are celebrated, the Eucharist is kept and there are many icons. The temple is the location of the Holy of Holies and should always be shown the utmost respect even outside the time of services. The temple is not the appropriate place for chit-chat, noise or frivolity. Within the temple only things pertaining to God, salvation, spiritual instruction and the like are appropriate. Other matters should be discussed outside the temple.

When we enter the temple, it is appropriate to make the sign of the cross three times with bows. This same practice is appropriate once we have left the temple.

Once within the temple it is again appropriate to make the sign of the cross three times with bows and then proceed to the tetrapod or analogion to venerate the icons.

When venerating icons, it is convenient to make three bows in total, two before venerating the icon and one after. Some people do four in total — three before and one after.

For the veneration of the cross <sup>or ~~the~~ ~~cross~~ ~~itself~~</sup> it is after customary to do three before and three after.

This usually takes the form of prostrations to the ground.

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The sign of the cross.

The sign of the cross is a mystical symbol which appears to have a certain power over evil, hence it

is used many times each day and at all Church services and at the holy mysteries. The sign of the cross is always made with the right hand (never the left) - The thumb, index and middle finger are held together to represent the Trinity and the two remaining fingers are tucked into the palm representing the divine and human natures of Christ. Disagreement over the way to hold fingers was a major factor in the Old Believer Schism. The Old Believers used the thumb and index finger to represent Christ's two natures and tucked three fingers into the palm to represent the Trinity. There's a warning in this to be sure not to degenerate into ideological thinking and rigidly judging various customs as being absolutely right or absolutely wrong.

When we make the sign of the cross we make it once or three times. We always touch our right shoulder first, as preference for the right is biblical. One tradition says that the word Holy in Holy Spirit should be on the right shoulder, but there does not seem to be a rationale for this. The other is that the right always precedes the left. This applies to everything, not just the sign of the cross!

The Sign of the Cross is always made upon hearing God's divinely revealed proper name - Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

It may be made when the priest blesses us with the sign of the cross & when the priest or deacon incenses us.

It may also be made at any point

in a service as a sign that we are fervently praying for what the particular prayer or petition is saying.

It is also customary to make the sign of the cross at the beginning and end of the reading of the gospel, whether at the liturgy, matins or at the celebration of the ~~at~~ holy mysteries.

When approaching to receive communion, we also make the sign of the cross which may be accompanied by a profound bow just prior to receiving. It is also customary to make the sign of the cross right after receiving. Some people kiss the base of the chalice right after receiving.

At the liturgy besides making the sign of the cross at every mention of the Trinity and before and after the gospel, it is also customary to make the sign of the cross accompanied by a fairly profound bow at the words of consecration. Some people also make the sign of the cross at: "We offer you your own...." and also at the beginning of the Our Father. Immediately after the priest has given the last person communion, the priest blesses us with the Holy Mysteries at which point we may also make the sign of the cross.

At microvannja also, it is customary to make the sign of the cross.

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STANDING, KNEELING, SITTING.

Outside of Lent, strict tradition calls for standing at all times as

a sign of respect for the presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

¶ According to strict tradition we do not have pews in our churches, but usually some seats on the periphery of the nave for those who need to sit at least sometimes.

If we follow strict tradition we stand at all times, but it is permitted to sit for ~~the~~ ~~any~~ any reading other than the gospel for which we must stand, the sermon, and at the kathismata (the monastic meditation) which word actually means sitting down. We must stand for the Akafist because the word means - not sitting.

Many churches in North America have pews; so a whole system of standing, kneeling and sitting has developed. Some people prefer to follow the older tradition. In



a Melkite Church, one often sees individuals in pews all doing different things. In Galician Churches, one expects a bit more uniformity; so those who prefer to follow the older tradition and stand for the entire service are advised to sit in the last pew or stand in the back of the Church so as not to create an unnecessary distraction for others. Following the adage: "When in Rome, do as the Romans." is probably good advice for those sitting anywhere except the last pew. When sitting ~~the~~ during the liturgy.

In a Galician Church with pews, we should stand for the initial blessing. It is permitted to sit for the ektenias and the antiphons, but we should stand from the beginning of the hymn of the

incarnation until the beginning of  
the apostol. We should stand  
from the Alleluia until the  
end of the gospel.

We stand during all incensations  
and whenever the priest faces  
us for a blessing or the gospel  
reading. We may sit for the  
sermons. We stand for both  
the small & great entrance and  
from Peace be with all before the  
creed until the ekteny ~~of~~ before  
the Our Father. We stand from the  
Our Father until the end of the  
liturgy. In some places people  
kneel from Holy, Holy, Holy, until  
It is fitting, but this is not  
appropriate, although one should  
never correct the elderly who  
were raised with this custom.

At vespers and matins, it is  
appropriate to stand for the  
entire service except for the

reading of the kathismata when it is  
appropriated to sit.

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## Candles and lamps.

Candles <sup>and lamps</sup> represent the light of Christ  
and it is the custom to light  
them before icons and to say a  
prayer. We may light as many  
candles as we like. Some people  
light one candle for each living  
and/or dead family member.  
In some Churches there are  
vigil lights already in place,  
in others we buy taper candles  
at the back of the Church and  
place them at various icons.  
It is also customary to offer light  
in various forms at home.  
Traditionally olive oil and beeswax  
are used, but other materials are  
permitted.