

May 12, 2015

St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church

Youngstown, Ohio

Speaker: the Very Reverend Protopresbyter Dr. Steylios S. Muksuris, Ph.D., Professor of Liturgy and Languages at the Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh, PA. Father Steylios serves at Dormition Greek Orthodox Church in Aliquippa. His talk is entitled " Setting Aside All Cares and Differences: The Divine Liturgy as the Locus Theologicus Where Diversity Gives Birth to Unity."

Summary:

Fr. Steylios gave a very insightful presentation by initially citing Fr. Robert Taft's point on the purpose of the Divine Liturgy as – glorifying and being with God without placing too much emphasis on always "doing" something or activity. That is, we need to just be with God and become more aware of God with us instead of always rushing around to do something as our post-modern western culture negatively influences us into over activity. Father Steylios then distinguished how both the **communal prayer** of the Divine Liturgy and other liturgical services should be complemented by **personal prayer** and reflection on the Scriptures, especially the Gospels. He stated: "Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi" – (the rule of prayer is the rule of believing which is the rule of living). To further his point, George Florovsky was quoted as saying: "worship is the norm of Christian existence." What does worship mean?

Orthodox and Catholics alike need to come out of our individualistic and narcissistic mind set to experience the supernatural life that awaits us in the coalescing of time and eternity within the Divine Liturgy. One recommendation was that both clergy and laity need to prepare for the Liturgy through: fasting, reflecting on Scripture , charitable acts, Confession and simply focusing on being with God as opposed to always focusing on doing something. We must imitate Christ in the Incarnation. Just as he emptied himself into our human condition; may we empty ourselves into being with God through both Liturgical Worship and personal prayer. As John Zizioulas said: "Christ's victory transforms us" in that we love God and God loves us by sending the Son and the Holy Spirit into our world to be with us.

In conclusion, Fr Steylos mentioned what St. Peter said to Jesus on Mt Tabor: "Lord how good that we are here" and what God the Father said "this is my beloved Son on whom my favor rests. **LISTEN to Him**" (Matthew 17: 4-5). The main point is that we need to be with God the Father, through Christ , in the Holy Spirit and listen to the **WORD made flesh** instead of always running ourselves ragged into over activity. As the Psalm says: "Be still and know that I am God" (46:11).

Submitted by:

Dr. Richard Mattiussi

